

The Missionaries



G.W. Target

THE MISSIONARIES

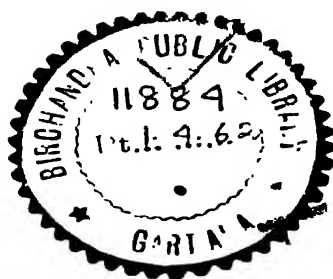
The world knew Stefan Janek as the great white doctor of black Africa, the Nobel Prizewinning physicist who had suddenly become a missionary. And the world knew Laurence Kinman as a traitor, a renegade white doctor who had gone over to the Mau Mau, a convicted criminal justly sentenced.

The world knew that Janek had been murdered by his native dispenser Adam Kumali, who had returned evil for good, hate for love; and that Kinman had joined the Kumali gang. Small wonder that an angry London crowd gathered outside the gaol on the morning of Kinman's release in August 1960.

But of course the truth was nothing like as simple as that. During the week-end after Kinman's release a young friend of his—narrator of this story—manages to piece together the strange and twisted tale of the terrible massacre in that African mission settlement two years before; and readers will enjoy, in following this process, a novel of modern Africa told with all the passion and burning actuality that this young author has at his command.

The Missionaries

by
G. W. TARGET



GERALD DUCKWORTH & CO. LTD.
3 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.2

First published 1916
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**PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY EBENEZER BAYLIS AND SON, LTD.
THE TRINITY PRESS, WORCESTER, AND LONDON**

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*For Herbert Clifford and Warren Staples
Missionary Doctors*

FRIDAY

5

Bring my soul out of prison,
that I may praise thy name:
the righteous shall compass me
about; for thou shalt deal
bountifully with me.

PSALMS 142:7

NEITHER TAKING IT AS GOSPEL BECAUSE I FANCIED THE COLOUR OF his eyes, nor calling him a liar because he hadn't got anything in black and white worth a tickey—but just the way it was, the time it took, in my own way and in my own time: the where, when, and the how of it (and even some of the why), here a little, there a little—one foot in the gutter, one eye cocked on the wandering stars, no confidence in man and princes, and even less in great images of gold, silver, brass, iron, clay, or whatever the fashionable material is these loving days.

Yet not I, but Kinman—he's the one to watch: Dr. Laurence Kinman, not that I got round to calling him Laurence for long enough, shyness or something, but he's the man and the measure.

You take that word "tickey". Until he had used it a couple or three times, and I knew him well enough to ask, it was what my eldest child called a clock when she was two and a bit. Now I know it's a South African threepenny piece, the coin you toss to a black after he's sweated his guts out carrying the white man's burden for you.

"Hey boy!" you shout, and your brother by another marriage fights some of your other brothers for the chance to earn his daily mealies, to smile, to go, to come, to know his place and keep it—and when he's done whatever it was you wanted done, when, sweating, he cups his hands for his hire, you toss him a tickey, and thank God that you are not as other men are. At least you don't stink, and have the arse out of your trousers.

Ten rounds then, in my own way and in my own time, left,

right, and centre, bang on what they did to Kinman—though more left than right as it's the right hand wields the sjambok, and well out from under where the centre cannot hold. Me? I'm full of passionate intensity, and you can pick what bones you like out of that.

SO THERE I WAS, AUGUST THE FIFTH AT LAST, GETTING OFF THIS second bus of the morning at the stop almost opposite the prison across the road (two thousand men and brethren caged), and none too happy about it as I don't normally use public transport except that I was having trouble with the gear-box on my bike (1949 *Triumph* 500 cc maroon Speed Twin with Watsonian sidecar, original cellulose, recently overhauled, good all round condition, new tyres, chain, battery: £25 or near offer) . . . the misted sun already released and pale in the clear sky, high above the cell-blocks you could see over the wall—which made it late in the day even if I was half an hour early for opening time.

But, early or late, I wasn't the first, not by a long chalk I wasn't. There must have been thirty, forty people outside the gates already, women mostly, couple of coppers watching points, five or six cars drawn up along the kerb, men inside smoking: Press . . . vigilant custodians of public morality and the common-weal, with a deadline to make for the Lunch Edition unless there was a train-crash or robbery with rape and chips between now and then.

And of a crowd I wanted no part—Kinman must have been due out with John Reginald Barabbas—so I bought the *News Chronicle* (as was) from the newsagents on the corner, and went next door into the caff for some breakfast.

NOT THAT JOAN, EIGHT MONTHS AND A BIT GONE THOUGH SHE WAS, wouldn't have lumbered up with me and fried the odd rasher, nor even that I couldn't have boiled an egg myself, but that five o'clock in the morning is three hours before I even think about it normally, and I couldn't have faced it.

"I will if you like," she said into the pillow.

"You make the most of it," I said. "I'll just get the kettle on for some tea."

"You don't know the relief," she said, and humped over on to my side, her warmth coming up at me as though it wasn't bad enough to be up and about that time of day, Kinman or not. She opened one eye. "Must you go? Surely Laurie can find his way here

without you if he wants to—you have written, so he's got the address."

"I'm beginning to wonder," I said. "Still, a friendly face on such a morning."

But I took her up a cup, saw to it that the kids hadn't suffocated or something during the night, and went out into the grey and clattering streets round where we live, walked along the Bromley Road, and caught the first bus out of Catford Garage.

"First bus?" said the conductor. "You'd have to be up earlier than this to catch the first bus."

"Why?" I said, "haven't the union got round to stopping it yet?" And gave him a pound-note for the fare.

He had enough for the change by the time we reached the Elephant. "Yes," he said, "and they need to get round to people like you—it's people like you make this job a misery." It was nearly all pennies and tanners.

So you can tell the mood I was in.

"YES DEAR?" SAID THE WOMAN BEHIND THE COUNTER—AND SHE HAD one of the nastiest boils on the side of her face I have ever seen, swelling right up, nearly closing her eye.

"Bacon, egg, chips please," I said, "and a tea."

"Bread or dripping-toast?" and it must have been giving her some stick one way and another.

"Dripping-toast," I said . . . "You ought to get that seen to, you know."

"Wasn't too bad yesterday," she said. "Come up overnight."

"Shall I pay now?"

"Sit down, dear, and I'll bring it when it's ready—won't be long." She gave me the tea. "And don't you worry. I'm off down there directly the surgery opens, quarter to nine."

The place wasn't all that full, suppose the early rush was over, and there was an empty table in the backroom, only one man at it, writing something, looked an interesting enough character, creased black suit, had this battered old tin box with a leather handle beside him on the floor . . . but this morning I needed to watch points like the coppers, and a railway-porter was just leaving, so I had this seat by the window—and there must have been another five, ten people outside the gates, and one other car that I could see. And that tea was just the job—hot, strong, and sweet.

"Who they letting out?" said the man next to me, lorry-driver

by the look of him, "wonder they ain't got nothink better to blinking do, standing about."

"Thought they was hanging that bloke did a copper in over the other side?" said his mate.

"That's next week, Charlie—and it's too early for that anyway, they don't hang you till nine o'clock, when they've got the streets aired. Proper matinee." He glanced sideways at me, liked an audience. "Wonder they ain't got nothink better to do, standing there." Must have been because I wasn't a lorry-driver or whatever. "That and holes in the road, watch anythink some people will—blame it on the telly, myself." He finished his cup, being very particular about the grouts. "Ain't there nothink in the papers?"

This was for the audience, so I turned from the back page—and Brian Statham had yet again kept LANCASHIRE in control at Bristol, snatching the vital wicket that gave his side first innings lead by two runs—and, so help me, it was Kinman the fuss was about: nothing like a main feature mind you—after all, he wasn't escaping over the wall to make a dash for a waiting car—but at least a small cap headline and a gassed-up snapshot, the kind they use when they haven't got an original, could very well have been ten other men. And on the front page and all!

MAU MAU DOCTOR FREE TODAY

"That the one got two years?" said this man. "Chucked his lot in with them?"

"That's him," I said. "Though you can't believe all you read in the papers, can you?"

"Should have hung him," said his mate. "Lot of bleedin' savages—look what they done to that other one at the time, terrible."

"That's right," said this man. "What was his name? a Pole or somethink."

"Janek," I said. "Dr. Stefan Janek. He was killed, though how was never established."

"That's right," said his mate, "and look what they done to him—lot of bleedin' savages."

"What they letting him out for?" said this man.

"He only got two years," I said.

"Should have hung him," said his mate.

"Why?" I said. "He only did what he thought was right—they probably needed a doctor more than most."

"You a friend of his?" said this man.

"What are you on about?" I said—and it only needed a cock to crow, that was all.

"Just wondered," he said, and winked at his mate.

Which was a bit too close to the bone for comfort, and we let it drop, nothing said but a lot understood . . . and I skated over the rest of the front page :

TV soccer on Sept. 10

Mr. KHRUSCHEV

REPLIES TO

Mr. MACMILLAN

Mike

and Susan

part

Katanga:

Tshombe calls

in the chiefs

V-BOMBERS

CAN CARRY

TWO SKYBOLTS

And they began to make tracks—you know, get their money ready and roll a fag and that—and were on their feet as my plate and two of toast turned up.

"Makes me feel hungry," said this man. "Come on Charlie, we'll never get to Wolverhampton this rate."

"Have a good trip," I said.

"You don't wanna worry about us, mate," he said, "we know the way."

"Which is half the battle," I said.

"You wouldn't nob it," said his mate. "Hope you do."

"I'll manage somehow," I said.

"Give him our regards," said this man, and winked, and the pair of them outed . . . and I had elbow-room to spread the paper, and though it was a shame to let the chips go cold I just gave the column a quick read :

DR. LAURENCE KINMAN, jailed for joining Mau Mau terrorists, is due to be released today.

The 39-year-old doctor was given two years, and it is believed he has failed to earn any good-conduct remission.

Sentenced in Central Africa, he was transferred here at the request of the authorities as it was thought his presence there would inflame tension, already at breaking-point due to a series of incidents.

The case caused a sensation at the time, as he was accused of aiding the gang responsible for the brutal murder of his fellow missionary, Dr. Stefan Janek, Nobel Prize winner and famed humanitarian. It will be recalled that Dr. Janek, following an accident involving a nuclear reactor in the United States, renounced his brilliant career in the medical aspects of Atom Physics in order to go to Africa.

His death

Held as hostages, Janek's murder

occurred as Security Forces were closing in on the gang in the notorious Kinyanjui Forests. Led by self-styled "General" Adam Kumali, the surviving terrorists eluded capture, but abandoned Kinman to his fate. He refused to plead at his trial.

A Home Office spokesman today declined to comment on Kinman's future. It is believed he may be going to his parents in Stoke-on-Trent.

"This is his home," his Mother told me. "We will never turn him away, no matter what he has done."

Mission-trained Kumali, who had taken to the forests following a charge for theft, was killed by loyal tribesmen a few weeks later, and his death marked the end of a confused era of bloodshed and violence.

And it read worse every time they restewed it. Which probably accounted for the crowd—and me too if it came to that and you wanted to be nasty, except that I was at least wanting him *out*, whether or not I actually saw him leave: there was this spare bed he could have, and the odd crust-and-scrape until he could get himself straight. . . . Still, I'd better not pile on the loving agony too much—let's just say that Joan knew him in Stoke when she was a girl, that I admired what little I knew of him as a man, and that we both thought he'd been left carrying the can of other people's dirty water for long enough.

Anyway, whatever, the bacon, egg, and chips were as good as the tea, and I mopped-up the yolk and fat with the two of dripping-toast—one last little wipe round with the last bit of crust, and that was me filled with bread for the morning, according to my eating.

By which time the crowd across the road was as near being a demonstration-in-waiting as makes no difference, and I could only sit there with another tea, and marvel at the power of the Press or something. I mean, Kinman at least knew that I'd be there to meet him, but we could hardly have known that fifty or sixty spares would be there as well. Not that I'd had any word from him,

nor even that I'd ever met him to speak to, but, as I'd said to Joan, "A friendly face on such a morning."

And it promised to be a morning and a half by the shape of it.

RISING EIGHT I GOT UP, PAID THE WOMAN BEHIND THE COUNTER . . .

"It's not so bad now I've been working a bit," she said. "Early on it was crippling me."

"You'll feel better when it's been lanced."

"Be in that surgery like a shot—although you can't let it get you down, can you?"

"Good-bye," I said . . . went out into the free gift of air and sunshine, and crossed the road.

THE POLICE-CAR, UNOBTUSIVELY CONSPICUOUS THE FAR SIDE OF THE bus-stop, was like a bulge in the back pocket of Authority, signifying the book of rules you could have thrown at you should the need arise . . . and I should have known what was in this particular wind because as I got to mingling with the outriders of the crowd I saw that most of them were carrying home-made banners and posters at the ready—mainly cardboard from 28lb. margarine-boxes, though some had spread themselves on brown-paper, and one bright spark had stuck his Saving Message for Suffering Humanity round the sides of a big corn flakes carton mounted four-square on a handy length of two-by-two. And though they weren't on parade as yet I managed to get enough of the message to see which way the wind was likely to whirl. . . .

BACK TO THE JUNGLE KINMAN
NO PLACE IN ENGLAND FOR TRAITORS
LOYALTY ABOVE LIFE
KINMAN KUMALI KILLERS

"They releasing your Leader?" I said to a well set-up woman out of thumping distance.

"Kinman," she said, and laughed as though she couldn't help it—and well set-up? She hadn't got more than two stone of fat on her.

"Kinman? Who's he?"

"Don't you read your papers?" she said, not really taking that much notice.

"Only the cricket," I said. "He anything to do with your lot?"

She laughed again, but this time she meant it, and I wouldn't

fancy being in the same stable with her and a horse-whip. "Here, JF!" she yelled to someone behind me, "there's a youth here wants to know if Kinman's anything to do with the Association!"

I turned, slowly, without letting on I knew I was outnumbered—and JF was, at first sight, probably a man: short, grey, smooth, wearing a black raincoat like a cape, staring eyes.

"Who?" he said, and he was a man right enough, voice on him like a public-address system, though he had very small hands, and that unnaturally clear skin the advertisements claim is a woman's priceless heritage. Must have been fifty-five, sixty. And he didn't make a move, stood where he was on the other side of the foot-lights, waiting to time his entrance.

"This one," said laughing girl, laughing. "Wants to know if Kinman's anything to do with us?"

"Does he now?" said JF, and he moved from among his little group of acolytes, subdeacons, and deacons like stately, plump Buck Mulligan himself, his raincoat, unbuttoned, sustained gently behind him by the mild morning air, until, delicate upon the balls of his feet, he was facing me at what was probably his debating distance. Those in the know gathered round for the *corrida*.

"Good morning," I said, though I had thought of some remark about black being the liturgical colour for Requiem Mass—but the lengths of two-by-two were too handy for comfort.

"Are you trying to be funny, young man?" And I was trying to place his voice. Seen close he was all his age.

"Me?" I said. "This is, surely, a solemn and sombre occasion?"

He paused, obviously part of the performance, and fixed me with what was no doubt intended to be a penetrating and searching stare, but all it did was make him look even more pop-eyed.

"Anybody," he said, when I hadn't withered, "who is neither a political imbecile nor an utterly unscrupulous scoundrel knows that we are completely, absolutely, and irrevocably opposed to every manifestation of that leprous, debased negrophilism which race-integrationists such as Kinman would thrust upon us as the mistaken and misguided solution to the urgent problem of African nationalism—the rising tide of which nationalism, sir, we prefer to call by its right and proper name." He stared around. "Obscene and unspeakable barbarism."

And those in the know shewed they knew about that bit, anyway—and I had his voice: East End (and nothing to be ashamed of in that, except that he *was* ashamed), educated at some public school

of the mind (probably Greyfriars, with Harry Wharton & Co.), BBC graduate, and Hyde Park Speakers' Corner regular on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays—but the East End kept having the last word.

"Kinman would thrust what?" I said, not that he needed goading.

But, as I thought, JF had flattened hecklers before now.

"A typically senseless remark," he said, a decibel or so up. "Here we are, faced with the surrender of all we regard as of value . . ." And off he went, bang bang, and every once in a ranting while I took some of it in ". . . rapine and the imminent break-down of all standards and restraints . . . a return to savagery, cruelty, humiliation, outrage, unimaginable obscenities perpetrated on nuns and married women . . . the rule of lust and blood . . . frenetical rabble of African savages—and you, sir, you can only find in your craven stars to make trivial and senseless innuendos."

All at nineteen to the dozen and twice as nasty, using all his face at once.

"Warm for the time of year, isn't it?" I said, which was the best I could manage under the circumstances. Not only that, but anything better and there would have been an imminent break-down of something or other, let us not give it a name.

"If you were not the poltroon you manifestly are," he said, and it must have been tiring, always up on the balls of his feet, "I would deal with you as those who brought me up taught me to deal with those having no proper pride in race."

"Which is how you propose to deal with Kinman?"

"Are you a friend of his?"

"What has that got to do with it?" I said—but the only cucks in that part of London were capons, all nicely frozen for the week-end rush.

"It appears you are extremely interested in friend Kinman."

"So there's a law against it?" I said.

"There's a morality and justice higher than the law, and even although it is never merely legal to judge a man by the company he keeps, by the friends he allies, it is morally sometimes justifiable and, on occasions such as this, it may even be a duty, however unpleasant, so to do."

"Yes," I said, and gave a loaded look round at the banners and posters, "you're in excellent company." The reporters were already gathering at the door in the main gates, several photographers

screwing flash-bulbs in their cameras, the couple of coppers now four, and all the signs about that Kinman was at hand, even on the other side of the doors.

I nodded in that direction. "Wouldn't want you to miss anything. . . ." And I knew the boys in the backroom: they wouldn't risk trouble throwing Kinman to these mewling pussies, last thing they wanted, questions in the House and all that caper. I mean, they did treat it gentle when they only gave him two years in the first place, and they wouldn't want much of that gone into again, not them. The reporters weren't knocking themselves up either.

Not that JF wanted it treated gentle—this was a lifted t:umpet. "I will, please God, deal with you later," he said to me, and then moved off at the head of his little army with banners towards where the coppers stood before the gates: five feet nine in their great big boots and helmets, trying hard to make it look like six feet one.

I LET IT GO, EASY, AND HUNG WELL BACK OUT OF ALL MANNER OF harm's way on account there was something more than pestilence walking abroad in the darkness of that bright morning—and, seconds from the off, that crowd of democratic citizens exercising their prerogative or something were packed round the door to one man's liberty like Barabbas was their choice.

And then (so help me) they began to sing *Land of Hope and Glory* . . . the tune catching on, a bit straggly and unsure at first, but working up to a fine old lather every new line, confidence in numbers—and, what's more, they knew the words and seemed to mean them. It was really very moving . . . the walls of the prison like the set of a Grand Opera, say *Leonora* or *Fidelia* or whatever its liberating name is, the sun now risen high into the morning, pale shadows across the roofs and pavements, pigeons swirling about, people going to work, footfalls along the other side of the road, cars, buses, lorries on their way to Woolwich, Wolverhampton, or wherever—and this little group singing its faith in all the lovely big words . . . all but for what they had in mind for Kinman.

"WHAT THEY SO HAPPY ABOUT?" SAID A MAN WHO STOPPED BY TO have a dekko on his way to work. "Not the Salvation Army, is it?"

"It's a demonstration," I said.

"Not that doctor they're letting out?" he said. "I read about that, first thing. Whose side they on?"

"Length of rope," I said, "and they'd lynch him."

"They ought to leave the poor sod alone, he's done his time—what more do they bleedin' well want?"

"Beats me."

"And what's he done anyway?" he said. "Helped a few poor bloody niggers with their liver and lights shot out, and they go and send him up for two years."

By which time the third or fourth verse was well on the last knockings, and all the raised banners were swaying with the thump and the pomp of it.

"Sally Army can sing better than that lot," he said, and nodded, and off he went, and I watched him bowl on towards the queue at the bus-stop—and then the singing stopped very much as it started, couple or three voices isolated, and I looked back towards the stones of law and main gates. The door in them had opened, and there was a warder or someone in a peaked-cap standing framed, half-in and half-out, and even though I couldn't see JF I knew by the agitation of banners in the middle of the scrum that he must have been leading off something alarming. A bulb flashed, then another, then a couple of the reporters pushed a way out, there obviously being nothing worth more than a paragraph—the boys in the backroom *were* playing it safe.

Which meant I'd missed him, and all he had of ours was the letter and postal order.

Anyway, I could see the warder shaking his head, and then he ducked back in and shut the door behind him with a clang I could hear even where I was. End of Act One and no mistake, all the many hunters baulked—and me too if it came to that, only more so on account I at least had a thicket ready for his rest in this day of trouble. All I could do now was hang fire to see if he'd make it under his own steam, and Joan would phone me at work if he did.

Phone! that was it, and I had this half-hundredweight of pennies from the second conductor, and not only that, but in a phone-box I'd be out from under the feet of the frustrated demonstrators, such as have been known to set the dogs at a new quarry.

And there, under the shadow of the next corner, was one, empty, so I made it a bit quick, found the number under PRISON COMMISSION, clanked in the pennies, and dialled. And waited.

"Yes?" said a woman after the umpteenth ringing tone. "Can I help you?"

So I skirmished, short and simple.

"I'll put you through," she said. "Hold the line please."

As far as I could see the four coppers were now moving the crowd on—the reporters having skated long since, public morality well and truly enervated.

"Duty Officer," said a man.

"Hello," I said. "I'm sorry to bother you, but would it be at all possible for you to tell me anything about a prisoner due for release today? His name's Kinman."

"Sorry, sir," and he sounded as sorry as an orderly sergeant on a jankers parade, "we don't give information of that nature, sir."

"Could I speak to the Governor then, please?"

"Doubt it, sir."

"What do you suggest I do then?"

"Well, sir," he said, and you could almost hear him thinking, "you could write to the Governor's secretary."

"But I'm supposed to be meeting him now—I mean, it's not as though I'm planning an escape or anything."

"Sorry, sir."

"Thank you," I said.

"That's all right, sir," he said, and hung up on me, clatter clatter, no doubt to go and dust the steps on the spare gallows.

The crowd had been moved on now, just these divided little groups still obstructing the pavement here and there, moving quickly enough to stay out of the trouble the young coppers could make, but slowly enough to preserve the civic fiction that they had a legal right to be there. Couldn't see cope nor chasuble of JF, so he'd probably led retreat in good order. So I pushed open the door—and almost trod on the corns of laughing girl.

"Thought it was you," she said. "Some people have absolutely no consideration for the convenience of other people, none. I've been waiting a good ten minutes."

"I'm sorry," I said, but didn't bother to argue the toss. "What happened?"

"They made other arrangements for his release. Trust the Home Office to protect such swine."

"Thought you were merely going to let him read your messages of welcome?"

She laughed like a woman standing in the need of love. "He'd have got mine where it hurts," she said. "Swine like that need teaching a lesson they'll never forget." And she laughed again, and it went right through you, the aching loneliness of it.

"Ever thought of the rack?" I said. "Few fires at Smithfield?"

"If I were a man," she said, "I'd know how to deal with you."

"Swine like us make poor bacon," I said, "we're not the Gadarene kind," and (so help me) you could see her knuckles whitening round the strap of her armour-plated handbag, fetch you an ugly clout in the right hands—which she had. "If you're going to telephone Torquemada I'd be delighted to let go of this door."

"All you blasted black stooges are the same," she said, "yellow right down your spine."

I let go. "Must admit we're a colourful bunch," and turned and skated for more reasons than that.

AS I JOINED THE QUEUE AT THE BUS-STOP JUST ALONG FROM THE gates I half-turned as though looking to see if a bus was coming, and saw that she was watching me from the corner, and so soon as I settled in line for the meat-truck she hared off down the road, obviously in search of JF and reinforcements. Which was another thing I wanted no part of, not then, not now—if they couldn't crucify Kinman, they certainly weren't going to keep their hand in on me.

So, first chance, when she was the wrong side of a bus coming the other way, I dived back across the road and into the caff a bit quick.

There was a girl behind the counter this time, black hair, fifteen, sixteen—the girl her mother had been years ago, except her mother wasn't so old then.

"Tea please," I said.

"Sugar?" she said, and you know what I mean—same age, different experience.

"Yes please. . . . Mother gone down the surgery?"

"No," she said, "there was a doctor in and she's gone upstairs with him and my Auntie Florrie and they're going to see to it up there."

"It's a nasty one," I said.

"Mum was up half the night with it, and we're going on our holidays tomorrow."

"Hope she feels better," I said, and paid, and went out into the back . . . There wasn't anybody else there, so I sat right at the side in the corner out of the way. The old-fashioned clock on the wall was at twenty to nine, which meant I had a good quarter of an hour to lose the pack whose chase had a beast in view—me, Kinman, or any man, woman, or politician who got on their paranoiac nerves. It had already been a long day.

And the tea was just as good—the touch must have run in the family.

There was another paper on the end of the table, so I hooked it to see what they had to say about the "Mau Mau Doctor" . . . and yes, it was on an inside page, guttered between a cigarette advertisement and the Competition Crossword, but no photograph, probably on account Kinman didn't have the figure for a bikini:

RENEGADE DOCTOR OUT TO-DAY

The white man who joined Mau Mau will be set free at 8 o'clock this morning, after serving 2 years of his sentence.

As the prison gates clang behind 40-year-old Laurence Stanley Kinman, self-confessed terrorist, he will face a changed Africa. His gang leader, so-called "General" Kumali, has been cut down, the gang smashed. Mau Mau has been crushed. There can be no return to Africa for him.

Tragic Murder Recalled

On Sunday, at the new London Headquarters of the Missionary Society which sponsored him, a bronze head of Dr. Stefan Janek will be unveiled, the famous "White Saint of Black Africa" in

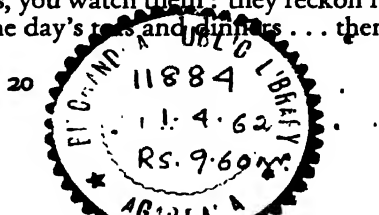
whose tragic murder Kinman was implicated.

The Rev. P. Stone, President of the Society, life-long friend and biographer of Janek, commented: "There is absolutely no link between the two events. Dr. Janek was a very great man whose name will ever live in our memories. This is our small tribute to his inspiring life and noble death."

The Home Office have refused to say whether Kinman is to be deported, and a spokesman for the BMA said to our reporter: "His case has not been considered as no formal complaint has been received regarding his conduct."

Which had Kinman weighed in the editorials, and found wanting.

Anyway, I read that, and then the state of the rest of the world through that filter, drank the tea, cleaned my finger-nails with a handy match-stick, couple of busmen came in, the conductor paid—it's always the conductor pays, you watch them; they reckon it's a poor conductor can't fiddle the day's tea and dinner . . . then :



To-day's Weather

(Midnight forecast)

GENERAL SITUATION: Weak N. to N.E. airstream covers British Isles.

LONDON, S.E. ENGLAND, E. MIDLANDS:

Dull in some areas at first, local drizzle. Sunny periods and variable cloud later, perhaps with scattered showers. Chance of thunder. Temps. near average. (Max. 65-70 deg.)

OUTLOOK: Probably little general change.

... then the big coloured calendars the walls were pinned with ... and then I read the blue and scarlet poster for last Wednesday's All-In Wrestling at the Local Baths, 7.30 p.m. at Popular Prices, the Main Event of the Evening being the Sensational Heavyweight Return Clash by Terrific Public Demand between those two Ever-Popular Sportsmen: the two grappling photographs a foretaste.

BLACK CHAKA (The Most Dangerous Man in the Ring - an All-Action Fighter: Has been called "**The Negro Hercules**")—Standing Challenge to Any Man in the World)

and

PHIL HENDERSON (King of His Division—Roughest and Toughest Mat-Man at Work Today: Has beaten Them All—**£500 Sidestake on every Contest!**)

And then, rising nine, I took my cup back, and so out into the free gift of air and sunshine, with never a biretta nor banner of either of my personal demonstrators within thumping distance. So I joined the queue at the bus-stop across the road (two thousand men and brethren still caged), elbowed my way on to the second of three buses which trundled along in convoy, paid my racking fare, stood up all the jolting way to Holborn Viaduct, walked from there, and eventually got to work a good ten minutes the wrong side of conscience.

NOW ABOUT THIS EIGHT DRAGGING HOURS A DAY, FIVE DAYS A WEEK, fifty weeks a year—there's nothing much to it ... invoices, advice-notes, day-books, ledgers, thorns also and thistles, nine pounds ten less stoppages, that's eight seventeen and a penny plus Luncheon Vouchers, the best manager I've ever worked for, and an arrangement about telephone calls in company time ... so I got stuck

into a bundle of late June and ordinary July invoices, checking amounts and price extensions, deducting discounts, and whatnot, until Joan phoned at eleven o'clock as she usually did when there was anything on the cards.

"How are you feeling?" I said.

"Not too bad," she said. "The children are playing with the Palmers so I'm getting on quite well really."

"Has he shewn up yet?"

"No, not yet. . . . How did you get on? did you meet him all right?"

So I told her, from breakfast-time to 08.40 hours.

"What are you going to do now?" she said.

"I don't know—wait and see I suppose, he may turn up later."

"Shall I get the extra in for the week-end?" she said, and then went on about if a leg of lamb for Sunday would make a change from the beef we'd had the last two weeks or whether a ham salad would be better as the forecast sounded promising, and whether the children would get the mumps as Janet Crisp along the road had it now, the doctor had been, and oh yes, Nurse Lewis had called to check the final arrangements for having the baby and everything, and the room and everything was just right she said . . . you know, the continuous thread of conversation on which you can hang the occasional pearls of marriage or something.

"You sound a bit flat," she said. "Don't be too disappointed—after all, he might have gone home, or anything."

"It mentioned in one of the papers that he might."

"Did you see that bit about Pastor Stone?" she said. "Mrs. Palmer shewed me, and it's just the sort of thing he would say." And she laughed, delighted. . . . "I've got a good idea though—why don't you call in and see him at lunch-time? It would give him a nasty shock to see you after what you said last time he preached at Lewisham, and he might just know something about Laurie."

"Pet," I said, "you have opened your mouth with wisdom, in your tongue is the something of something—only wish I had the odd ruby."

"Do him good to know we don't all agree with him, President or not."

"I'll give him segregation," I said.

She laughed again, and I could imagine her. "Don't rub him too much up the wrong way, he's quite nice really—he was very

kind to me that time when I was working in Bristol . . . and oh yes, before I forget—I've been about the bike and the man said it will be ready in the morning to call for."

"How much?"

"Two pounds five—so I drew it out the Post Office. I'll pay the Electricity with the rest when I find the bill, then it's done with."

"She looketh well to the ways of her household."

"Just you make sure you come home early tonight," she said, but sounded pleased, "and don't forget to bring something in for the children, but no more of those dreadful sticky sweets, we haven't got them off the cushions yet. . . ."

And we exchanged some more of our marriage, this, that, and the other. . . . "One last thing," she said, "they've moved to the new building now you know. . . ." and then we took up our separate days again: I entered the invoices, less discount, into the account ledgers until one o'clock (ten to, if you want the truth), and then walked out and away from it into the crowded lunch-time streets and squares of that part of Friday London.

LOVELY NAMES THEY HAVE . . . RED LION SQUARE, LAMB'S CONDUIT Street, Great Ormond Street, Brunswick Square, Mecklenburg Square, Doughty Street, all blue plaques and architecture, where Handel and Hogarth once walked, where Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* at No. 48 . . . and then you don't go along that way for a week or so as it always seems to be raining at lunch-time, but the sun shines one Wednesday and you take a walk where you remember it was pleasant last time, and you turn a corner out of shadow—and the corrugated-iron is up round another leasehold development: or whatever, the pneumatic-hammers are battering away, the roof is off, the walls coming down, and Progress is in hand at 12½%.

And the next time you have it in you to take a walk that way, the board is up on the first of the scaffolding:

30,000 sq. ft. OFFICES TO LET

Lifts, Central Heating, Car Parking etc.

ALL ENQUIRIES

**Regarding this Re-Development to the
Sole Agents**

. . . at some select address with a WELbeck number.

And in fewer months than it takes to get a baby ready for its first breath they have it done, bags of bonus and double-time—a tall, sub-divided, reinforced-concrete box with slabs of imitation stone pasted on the outside, as much glass as there's space for, and complete on the inside with strip-lighting, oil-fired heating, passenger-operated lifts, the lot: worth every penny of half what's owing on it, and with enough noise of hammer and tool of iron heard while it was in building to last many another contractor seven years.

WHICH MEANS THAT I FOUND THE DENOMINATION'S NEW BUILDING with no bother. . . . There it was, brand-ceramic-new on the corner of the square—the metal window-frames hadn't started staining the walls yet, so you can tell it hadn't been finished long, six, seven weeks, if that.

There was a man with one of those beards up on a ladder above the main entrance, finicking away at a nice little bit of incised Trajan . . .

INTO ALL THE WORLD

. . . almost finished, might have been working at a ten-ton Christ for all the performance, chip chip, how many miles to the plain of Dura?

Anyway, not to be nasty, I passed beneath Fred Epstein, pushed in through the stiff glass-doors, and the receptionist, displayed behind her display counter of books and magazines and papers and tracts, looked up and gave me the professional smile of the saved as I crossed the terrazzo towards her.

"Can I assist you?" she said.

"I hope so," I said. "I'd like to see Pastor Stone please, Pastor Peter Stone," and you had to nail it down like that as practically everybody was married to everybody else's brother or sister or wife's father's mother.

"Surely," she said. "When is your appointment for?"

"Appointment? you never needed one in the old building."

"I never had the privilege of working there," she said.

"Will you try his office for me?" And I smiled at her for a change. "It is rather important—at least, to me."

"Surely." She uncradled the ivory phone. "Whom shall I say?"

Which was a chance to get in the first punch. "Tell him the husband of Joan Bates, as was."

She dialled an internal number, and I heard the buzz. "Hello? Pauline here—is that you Barbara? Well there's a gentleman here wishing to see Pastor Stone. . . . No, he gives his name as the husband of Joan Bates."

"As was," I said.

"As was," and listened, smiling . . . and the place was new right enough, the joints in the stair-treads hadn't started gaping yet . . . and then she cradled the receiver back amid the Ministry of the Printed Page. "His secretary has gone to look for Pastor," she said. "Won't you take a seat please?"

"Thank you," I said, and noticed the yellow cover of *Bedtime Lessons for Children* by Auntie Ruth, and remembered that was the one about Uncle Stefan. . . . "May I look at this please while I'm waiting?"

"Surely," took a copy from beneath the counter to avoid spoiling the display, and presented it to me as a volume worth more than just money.

"Thank you," I said, and sat down on one of the chairs within call, and read in what Lessons Auntie Ruth would have our children sleep on.

THE GREAT DOCTOR

AFRICA is sometimes called the "Dark Continent" because we do not know very much about the pagan savages who live there.

It is a very hot country with many thick forests. In the middle of one is the Mission Hospital built by Doctor Stefan Janek who works there to tell the pagan savages about Jesus and His Love. They are called the "Baluka" Tribe.

Doctor Janek is called "Stefan" because he is Polish, and that is how Polish people spell "Stephen".

A lot of rain falls in the forests. The earth beneath the trees is always muddy. Because it is so hot and so wet it is not a very healthy place to live. But Doctor Janek has lived there for a long time.

The trees grow very thickly, and creepers and vines climb everywhere. This means that there is not much room for men and animals to live, so they build their homes up in the trees or on the banks of the many rivers. The Mission Hospital built by Doctor Janek, which is called

"Yumbala", is on the banks of a great river called the "Lukatembe".

Up in the trees live the monkeys and brightly coloured birds, and in the river dwell crocodiles and other wild animals.

The "Baluka" Tribe are hunters, and they hunt the many wild animals with bows and arrows and spears. Doctor Janek has told many of them about Jesus.

Their huts are made of branches covered over with mud. They become ill with many horrible diseases, and they have many cruel customs. But Doctor Janek . . .

"You can go up now," the girl was saying.

"Thanks," I said, stood up, and gave her the book back—would leave my three kids with bad dreams. . . .

"You're welcome," she said. "Fifth floor, room eight."

. . . and I crossed another ten yards of terrazzo to the lift, made the fifth floor, no bother, and the doors slithered open.

The secretary was saved too, at least she smiled, tall woman with a green dress on, thick ankles (probably the lisle stockings), thirty, thirty-two, but she looked a yard and a half under, her Christianity wearing thin at the corners, bit edgy about something or other. Seen her somewhere before, couldn't place where or when.

"Good afternoon," I said. "Am I right for Pastor Stone?"

"This way please," she said, and it must have been the strain of close contact with the mighty in their seats because she obviously wasn't with it at all, had mice scuttering beneath her stairs.

"Thanks," I said. "Must be pleasant working in a modern building after that other place you had."

"Yes, it is rather," and she led out round the corridor, dark blue lino-tiles, blue flush-doors, silver anodized handles and numbers, photographs of Past Presidents every so often on the cream walls like the Stations of the Cross or something, room 7, and . . . "In here please," she said, and ushered me into room 8, "Pastor hopes not to keep you a moment."

"Thanks," I said, and she eased the door shut reverently . . . fitting blue Wilton carpet, so new the pile was still fluffing, executive desk with standard equipment and all the trimmings, as per catalogue, an olive-green filing-cabinet in one corner (a rough plywood box on top, about a foot cube, out of place unless

he kept hamsters), book-case in the other with more standard equipment in the way of Bible Commentaries and Denominational Publications (including his own recent Authorized Biography of Janek : *Martyr of Yumbala*), a view into the plane trees of the square, and yes, how could you ever escape it? a full-colour reproduction of the Denominational Jesus in a limed-oak frame on the side wall to the left of the desk—you know, whiter than white robes, golden-brown hair shampooed and set as the hair of women and long enough to be a shame unto Him, trimmed beard freshly brushed, cornflower-blue eyes, and the skin and simper of a very nice young man indeed : but as much the Son of Man as my Uncle Mike.

So I looked out of the window into the green trees, and had one or two multi-coloured thoughts.

"AH! BROTHER!" HE SAID FROM BEHIND ME, WORST OF SUCH CARPETS, and I turned . . . yes, still as smooth, still as well-tailored and laundered and shined, still as dark-skinned as even a good English summer didn't get you.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Stone," I said, and we shook hands, "it's good of you to spare me the time." He had a real Dale Carnegie handshake, real sincere and strong—except he didn't have that kind of strength. Hadn't dried his hands any too well either, beautifully kept nails.

"No schedule ought to be so tight as to exclude all such personal contacts as these," he said, and waved me to the blue-leather visitors' chair, looked at his glinting wristwatch in the same movement, and then enthroned himself behind the desk. . . . "For these are moments of refreshing, when we can mutually recharge our spiritual batteries." And he believed it too, straight out of *Reader's Digest*. "Although," as he settled, "to be perfectly honest, I cannot say that I've adjusted to these, er, furnishings and fittings as yet. They tend to overwhelm one, especially . . ." and he smiled, "especially after what we had become accustomed to in our old building in Gough Square."

"Must be," I said, and he was the public speaker, he could make the running.

"Although," he said, "only the best is good enough for the work of God. . . . But well now, and how is Joan these days? I hear you've had your little addition."

"Not yet—unless it's been since eleven."

And he laughed with his mouth. "But a trying time for them, a trying time. . . . Will she have it in hospital?"

"At home," I said. "District midwife."

"Yes indeed," he said. "That will, er, make how many?"

"Four—three girls so far."

"Quite a little family—a standing need of prayer and yet more prayer, a good Christian family being a great witness. Although, praise God, each little one brings its own love," and laughed again. "Although we may sometimes wish they brought their own necessities and sustenance with them too."

And I laughed with him, but I'd heard him use the same form of words at more dedications of children than I'd kept count of.

"Yes indeed," he said. "*Suffer the little children*—the very words of our Lord and Saviour, Christ Jesus. What better Friend and Guide for this valley of the shadow?" I gave him his head in these green pastures, but he took silence for conscience, and snatched at the bit. "Are you letting Him take over in your life yet, brother?"

And there I was, landed with the same old question. "There's people working on it—time enough when the Spirit listeth."

"The Spirit that shall not always strive with man. . . ."

I looked up at the Denominational Jesus,. . . Not you Jack, I wanted a man, sweat and all, the marks of the plane and the saw and the hammer in the palms of His hands, as well as those of the nails—and I hardened what heart I had until I should hear the voice of that calling.

"Has Dr. Kinman been here today?" I said, and even though it took him like a left-hook from nowhere he was too old a hand to let it shake him—besides, I was a potential convert, a candidate for the velvet-paws approach.

"What makes you think he would come here?" And glanced at his watch.

"This is the Headquarters of his Church and Missionary Society, isn't it?" I said. "What more natural?"

"Well," he said, "not really any longer," and he shifted in his chair, and straightened the already straight blotter. "He was deprived of his church membership and standing at the, er—well, you know when as well as I."

"Thought you left binding and loosing on earth to the Catholics?" But he wouldn't bite. "Did he know he'd been excommunicated?"

"As a member, and as an employed worker, he would know perfectly well what would be the resulting outcome of the course of action he chose."

"But did he know? had anybody told him? sent him a letter?"

"Well," he said, "what with, er . . ." and I had him clinching for time, "what with his not sending regular reports prior to his, er, capture—well, it might just possibly have been one of those little things which bedevil even the most efficient organization." Then found a counter. "And we have just had the upheaval of moving house here."

"He must have had an interesting time here this morning then," I said, "a great welcome. Did you kill the fatted calf?"

"No one has admitted that he has been here," and he was obviously a dab hand at dealing with awkward church members, which was probably why he was the president. "By what right, or on whose behalf, are you making inquiries?" And by the way he looked at his watch you could tell that a tight schedule would be his way out if things got too dodgy for comfort.

"We just want to help him if we can," I said, "that's all."

"That does you credit."

"Look, Mr. Stone," I said. "I don't want to quarrel with you . . ."

He laughed, head back, big joke. "We won't come to that, brother . . ." but he'd heard about Lewisham, must have.

"... though I could find cause enough," which was a jab to jolt his memory in case he'd forgotten, "but Dr. Kinman hasn't been given a chance."

"He had every chance at his trial."

"*Yet he opened not his mouth,*" I said, more at the memory of that other Man brought to the slaughter than to him, but he either didn't hear or pretended not to. "Mr. Stone," I said, "don't let's waste time arguing the toss—all I want to do is meet him, and offer him the spare bed until he decides what he's going to do. A breathing-space, that's all, few questions asked—and Joan thought of you as a person likely to know where he might be."

He creaked back in his swivel-chair, had made up his mind, one way or the other. "What do you know about Kinman?" and you could see him slackening the schedule to give himself elbow-room.

"Joan knew him slightly when she was a girl, and I've written to him several times in prison, had a couple of answers, and I was hoping to meet him on his release this morning, but there was a demonstration outside, and I missed him."

"You have little enough to warrant opening your home to him."

"Only what I read about the case at the time, it was all too smooth. Besides . . ." and I would get this in, "the right people dislike him so much."

"Rather negative method of choosing your friends."

"Suits me."

He allowed himself a smile. "Well then, brother, would you like to know something of the truth?"

"Wouldn't we all?" I said, and looked at him straight—but he was an even dabber hand at coping with young ministers, feeling their oats, I was no bother, and it was me that shifted this time.

"This will be confidential," he said, "you understand that?"

"These four walls and Joan."

"Very well then," he said, and gave me the golden smile, "because you are her husband." He thumbed a button on the intercom. "And because, brother, you are, to my judgement, a sincere seeker after truth. Otherwise my lips would be sealed."

"Thank you," I said, and stayed with the Denominational Jesus until the door opened, and the secretary came in, surprised to see me.

"You buzzed, Pastor?" she said, and it worried me from where I knew her.

"Yes, Barbara," he said, "merely to tell you to take lunch now, and be back for half past two—we can finalize those other remaining letters then."

"Shall I post the ones you have signed already?"

"Yes, you might as well—and while you're by the cabinet will you save me the trouble by reaching me out the file on Kinman please? the second drawer."

"Surely," she said, which was quite the word in those parts . . . and then I looked at her face, and she was biting her lower lip, not looking what she was doing, not with it at all.

"The second drawer," he said—and it was no more to save him the trouble than ride my Uncle Mike's bike: he was getting at her, probably had been all morning, which accounted for the mice beneath her stairs.

Anyway, she lugged open the second drawer so hard that the plywood box on top of the cabinet jerked, not much, no chance of it falling or anything, but it moved just that bit. . . .

"Now, Barbara . . ."

"I'm sorry, Pastor," she said, and without looking at either of us she extracted the green manilla folder, slid the drawer back carefully, too carefully (but even then the box kiggled a bit, must have been top-heavy), handed the folder to him, and left, still biting her lip, probably to stop from crying, easing the door shut behind her.

"You must please excuse Barbara," he said, ever the shepherd to the lambs of the flock, "she's such a willing and capable girl, a good sincere Christian at bottom—she has, indeed, recently been in process of considering a call to the vineyard overseas, although, unfortunately, she has a disability—but she is, at the moment, under somewhat of an emotional strain."

"Surely," I said, but he was already fingering through what he had on Kinman—and by the way he fingered you could tell he had that folder taped, knew where every letter and paper was, no bother.

"Now remember," he said. "in confidence—none of this can bring any credit to reflect upon the work of God, none, and it is only because I regard you as a sincere seeker that I am going so far as to make plain what manner of man you are dealing with in Kinman. He has been a terrible disappointment to us all." He shook his head over what was obviously going to be the first exhibit in the case for the Crown.

"Mr. Stone," I said, "I wouldn't want you to place yourself in any compromising situation on my account—I mean, if this file . . ."

"Not at all," he said, and I couldn't have stopped him after that (he was the president, wasn't he?), "I feel it's about high time these matters were placed in their proper perspective." And this was to settle some unpaid accounts—the girl's, mine, and Kinman's too if it came to that: I'd be back late for work by the size of the folder, sure as little apples, but this was more than bread.

"I'm your man then," I said.

"I take it we may dispense with preliminaries? Biographical details—they're not really at issue, are they? We are all born, go to school. . . . In many ways he's a remarkable man—a quite brilliant student in his day. He had humble origins, his father being, I believe, a tile-fixer in Stoke-on-Trent."

"Joan comes from Tunstall," I said, "her father still works on a pot-bank."

"Now don't misunderstand me, brother, it's not where we come from, but where we are headed in life's brief journey that counts—and Jesus Himself was a carpenter, son of a carpenter."

"I think I know what you mean," I said, and I did—though he didn't know what I knew about *his* birth certificate. . . . I'd give him segregation yet.

"I have had the privilege of preaching in our Stoke church on many occasions," he said. "A fine little church in a hard-working city . . . a little inclined to the expression of censure perhaps. . . ." He smiled, but he probably still carried the scars if I knew the Stoke church. "No, every credit is due the man for having come so far along the way as to qualify as a doctor, helped, er, though he may have been. As I say, he is, in many admirable ways, a remarkable man—but for that one fault." He paused, and gave it the treatment, two three. "Pride, brother, pride, which goeth before destruction, before a fall."

"Convince me," I said.

"Well," he said, "even you will admit there's a deal of difference between rightful pride and inordinate pride—the pride which erects itself over against the mature judgement of those better qualified to know God's way for the individual in a given set of circumstances."

He unclipped one of the papers, and even across the desk I recognized Kinman's rounded handwriting.

"Now," he said, "as you probably know, he was chosen from a wide field of candidates to answer the call to join Dr. Janek at our Mission Hospital at Yumbala—this was in September, nineteen fifty-five. Dr. Janek felt that his time as a useful labourer was, if not drawing to a close, at least entering its last phase, and he communicated his request to us that a suitable younger man be chosen to join him—until then he had always elected to work alone, and although it was not, and indeed is not, our denominational policy to allow our employed workers to labour alone in any sector of the vineyard, we acceded to his known wishes." He smiled, man of the world to man of the world. "After all, he was Dr. Janek. Such men do not occur often in a generation, and we were not the only missionary society to make overtures to him at the time of his conversion—an internationally-known scientist wanting to go out as a medical missionary! No, we were not the only society interested." And we joined smiles, though for different reasons. "Enough to say that when, after more than ten years devoted,

selfless work he intimated the need of a younger man to share some of the burden, we were only too ready to gratify him. All of our younger men, both qualified and about to, were considered. Long and prayerful seasons of exhaustive inquiry were carried out, at the end of which Kinman was selected—surely a great privilege. Of course, he was a brilliant doctor and surgeon, and of good report, but to have been chosen to join Dr. Janek at Yumbala was the equivalent of being asked to join Dr. Schweitzer at Lambarene—this, surely, was an honour for any man. We wrote him and informed him of his selection. This is the answer we received.”

He passed me the letter, and one thing you had to admit about the handwriting, doctor or not you could read it, no bother—which is indicative of something, not to give it a name lest we prejudice the issue :

• *My Dear Brethren,*

Thank you very much for your letter.

I have long admired the stand taken by Janek against the use of nuclear weapons. For a man in his position to have risked inevitable misunderstanding in order to go as a Missionary into Africa was an action which moved me at the time, and which continues to move me no matter how many reservations I may have about what he has achieved there. I must admit at once that I know nothing about him which is not common knowledge. In company with the rest of my generation with similar interests I have read most of his translated books and writings, most of the dozen or so books which have been published about him, and some of the numerous articles concerning his life and work which have flooded the Religious Press in recent years. But I believe that I have sufficient information about his personality, and enough knowledge of my own, to realize that I would be unable to work with him in any useful way.

This is no reflection upon Janek, but rather upon me, for I am deeply conscious that you would do me great honour. However, in view of my estimate of the chances of our being able to work together as a team for the Greater Glory of God, rather than that of man, I ask not to be considered for the appointment.

I trust that this decision will not inconvenience you too seriously, as indeed it cannot, for there must be many other equally competent workers who would welcome the opportunity.

Thank you very much for having thought so highly of me, and I can only apologize for having disappointed your expectations.

Yours faithfully,

L. S. Kinman.

"Good handwriting," I said, "which is more than can be said for some," which was a dig at his.

"Can be extremely deceptive," he said, "not nearly such a good guide to character as is commonly supposed. But what about it as a letter? That, surely, is the point."

I skated through it again, and passed it back. "Proud? Where do you get that from?"

Which annoyed him. "Can't you see how, firstly, he places himself in the same category as Dr. Janek. Not would he, Kinman, be suitable to fit in with the older and more experienced man, and Dr. Janek of all men, but . . ." He looked and quoted, "but *he* would be unable to work with Dr. Janek."

"Depends a lot on how you read it."

"Then he calls him Janek, and not Dr. Janek—surely, as a sign of respect for an older man? even as a courtesy to the profession?"

I shrugged. "Is it important?"

"There's the whole tone of the letter," he said. "Who is, or was, Kinman that he should pass judgement upon Dr. Janek's work? what reservations can there possibly be upon its value?"

"Is Yumbala still a flourishing hospital?" I said.

"Well, no, but there were special circumstances."

"Janek dies, Yumbala dies—shouldn't the aim be to raise a native medical profession, so that when the Europeans have to leave . . ."

"True," he said, "but without full knowledge of the special circumstances . . ." and was already fingering the next exhibit.

"One thing," I said. "How come Dr. Kinman got the job?"

"Well," he said, and this would be his value as president, the odd smear of mortar here and there over the cracks, the reconciliation of the irreconcilable, "that's the devilishness of it—we can now see all too clearly, all too painfully, that it was the letter of a prideful man, but, at the time, we accepted it at its face-value, as you are accepting it, brother, without full knowledge of all the other relevant facts."

"You made a mistake then?"

"If you want to put it like that, yes."

"How did you persuade him to change his mind?"

"We invited him to attend an interview at Peniel Missionary College, and we together prayed the whole matter through."

"Yes," I said, and had to laugh, "I've seen that done at Lewisham more than once—by the time they've gotten through, anyone who still opposes the rail-roading motion is practically sinning the sin against the Holy Ghost."

He didn't answer, but offered the other smiling cheek, smooth from the liberality of after-shave lotion, could smell that or talcum powder from where I sat.

"But this time the Holy Ghost was wrong?" I said.

"God does not impose His will upon man."

"Obviously not." And one thing about this, I had him cold on account I was still the potential convert and still rated the soft answer, though it must have been a strain.

"I pray God," he said, "in His great and everlasting mercy, that you will one day come to an understanding of His ways and marvellous power with the hearts of sinful men."

But if he expected me to say "Amen" he'd backed the wrong horse—time enough when . . . well, whenever there was a need.

"And Dr. Kinman was eventually prayed through?"

"If that isn't putting too fine a point on it," he said, still trying, and passed me another letter from deeper down, same blue paper, narrow feint ruling, 1/9d. a box in Woolworth's:

My Dear Brethren, .

You have asked me to confirm my acceptance of the call to join Janek at Yumbala Hospital.

This is to do that.

So soon as I have settled my affairs I will place myself at your disposal, probably in 5 to 6 weeks. I presume I am to report to Gough Square from Fen Drayton?

But I would like you to put on record that I have been persuaded against what I believe to be my better judgement, and that although I will do my best to serve God in this new capacity I do not go to Africa in that spirit of hope and joy in which I am sure Paul always journeyed.

Please pray that all will be well, and that the money, which good

people will have sacrificed to provide, will not be wasted, and that God will thereby be Glorified.

*Yours faithfully,
L. S. Kinman.*

"And you sent him even after that?"

"Call it hindsight if you will, but at the time I remember I had much disquiet in my heart, but the Appointments Committee thought him excessively modest."

"Did you vote against him?"

"Well, no—we prefer these matters to be unanimous."

"Wasn't Mr. Lucas president then?" I said, and knew as well as he did—not that there could have been much love lost between them by all accounts as Mr. Lucas was one of the old brigade—and he had the nerve to pretend to look through the file.

"Why, yes," he said, "Pastor T. Lucas—he was Chairman of that Committee at the time."

"What did he think of Dr. Kinman?"

He at least had the Christianity to tell the truth. "Old Pastor Lucas thought a great deal of him. In fact it could well be said that he was the prime mover in his selection." He breathed in deep, and it passed for a sigh. "Fortunately he received his Home-call before all this came to a head—he would have been a broken man had he lived to see it."

I shrugged.

"You never knew Pastor Lucas," he said, "otherwise you would have few doubts—a good, sincere Christian man at bottom, for all his—well, for all his faults, and the Denomination can ill-afford to lose such as he. Although . . ." and his voice changed just that bit, and it could well have been another Homecall, wouldn't have broken his heart, "Although his wife is still quite active in the Message of course, serves on several committees."

"You've shewn me nothing convincing yet," I said.

"Perhaps not, brother," he said. "The proof is conclusive, not coercive. These, and the other documents, cannot force conviction upon . . ." And stopped dead—must have forgotten my un-won state for just that second.

"Can't say I blame you," I said, and smiled to prove it. "You used the same form of words last time you preached at Lewisham: 'These sombre facts about the necessity for segregation between white and Kaffir in our churches in Africa cannot force conviction

upon the prejudiced or the ignorant, because prejudice and ignorance encase the mind as with an impenetrable miasma'—something like that, anyway."

"I rather think I would have used the word 'separation'—but I'm sorry. In the heat of the moment . . ."

"I don't mind," I said, but I would just get the dig in. "Can't say I agree with you about the segregation though—shocking business." But he wouldn't bite at that either.

"This next one might be of more effect," and he had a typed wad of paper out. "It's a first report on Kinman by Pastor Fenton Miller Gould, who was then the President of our African Assembly—it's, er, Denominational policy for regular reports to be filed on all employed workers, and, well, this is the first."

"Sounds like an American—only an American could have a name like that and expect people to believe it."

"Yes indeed, an American. He is now President of the Overseas Missions Assembly at our World Headquarters—a strong and prayerful man, a privilege to know and work with, who has accomplished much in the outreach of the Message." He allowed himself a small national smile. "Although, to be perfectly honest, I must say I share your amusement at the names they go by."

We shared this twinge of malice as he handed me the sheets of paper, very good quality white bond, one of these American sizes, bound down the left-hand edge with red plastic, professional job—and the typing must have been done on an electric machine, only the best being good enough for the Lord and Uncle Sam.

A PRIMARY EVALUATION OF LAURENCE STANLEY KINMAN

"Yes," he said, "and it arrived two months before any such report was due in at all."

I rifled through it and looked over at the rest of the file still on his desk. "Mr. Stone, I'm sorry about this, but I do have to be back at work sometime."

He counted the minutes on his watch, rolled-gold at least, if not solid. "Twenty to, I think I'm right."

"Could I come in to read this some other time? Say Monday? I'd very much like to."

He'd obviously made his decision. "I'll do more than that, brother," and got up from behind his bit of the executive suite and came round to the cabinet. "I'll make you free of this." He opened the middle drawer, and the plywood box kiggled just as much as

before, must have been as top-heavy as Nebuchadnezzar, and he steadied it with his hands like a priest with a monstrance. "Yes," he said, "it *is* rather unsteady—I owe Barbara an apology."

Which was another thing you'd never give him credit for—unless he was acting the Christian to my gallery.

Anyway, he took out a foolscap manilla envelope from down the side of the drawer, and went back round behind the desk and sat down again.

"I'd better perhaps explain first," he said, "but, at the time of Kinman's—well, when there was the trouble, I was requested by the General Church Council in America to gather up a dossier of all the relevant information about him so that they could come to some kind of balanced judgement concerning him. I had twelve copies made of my original submission, only six of which were subsequently required by the Brethren, and . . ." He smiled, more the president than the man. "I retained those surplus to requirements. After all, one never quite knows when such a thing might come in and serve a useful turn—as now, for example."

"Yes," I said, "files have got long memories."

He opened up and took out a wad of flimsy, three or four loose sections paper-clipped together, nothing like the job I had in my hand, but already looking scruffy, curling at the corners. "You will find here," he said, "copies of most of these original documents—the two letters from Kinman, excerpts from several by various of his immediate superiors and colleagues, including the report you have, and . . ." He paused, and gave this the treatment as well, two three, "copies of some sent us by Dr. Janek himself."

"Marked *Attacta ad Iconem Prodigiosam*?" I said.

He laughed. "Yes indeed, we have the originals of those in the archives of our library." And laughed again. "But," he said, "I think I'd better perhaps, shall we say censor? this material . . ." and must have seen on my face what I had in mind. "No, brother, merely in the interests of readability—covering letters and the like. But you need have little fear that I will delete anything of vital significance." He smiled, and began to leaf through the pages of one of the sections, licking his thumb every so often. "But you go right ahead and glance at the one you have, because . . ." and he looked sly, the only word, "even although you will be able to study the copy at your leisure you will thereby be enabled to judge of its accuracy and so forth."

So I went through the motions, watching him on the quiet, but

all he did was take out one of the pages towards the end, didn't have to look hard for it either, knew what he was looking for, no bother.

"Well now," he said after a bit more rustling for effect, and I looked up, "you will find here much to interest you," and he folded the section into the envelope, leaving the rest loose on the desk, and we exchanged lots.

"Thanks," I said, "when do you want them back?"

"Well, there's no immediate hurry, but please feel free to pop in when you are around this way again—I will gladly discuss the issue when you are in possession of the information contained there."

"When are you to preach at Lewisham again?" I said, and stood up.

He smiled, and you had to like him for it—the man, if not the president. "So you can sharpen your knife, brother?"

"Me?"

"You," and we laughed.

"Thanks for this," I said, "I'll look after it."

"In confidence now," he said, and gathered the rest away into a drawer before standing up.

"Does Dr. Kinman know you've got it?"

He came round to open the door for me. "Yes, I believe so."

"Was he in this morning?"

"Yes, he was."

"Why did he come?"

He laughed, and opened the door. "What more natural? This is the Headquarters of the Church and Missionary Society he belonged to, isn't it?"

Of course, he had me, and I laughed with him. "Mr. Storrie," I said, "I won't disguise the fact that I disagree with you and your Church about Dr. Kinman, and segregation, and . . ."

"Separation, brother, separation."

"And probably everything else too, but today you've come up trumps."

He held out his hand and we shook on it, drier now, less Dale Carnegie.

"Remember me to Joan, and I pray God you have your little addition safely."

"Thank you," I said, and went out past him into the corridor. and talcum powder it was.

"Can you find your own way out?"

"All the way," I said. "Good-bye, and thanks again."

"You're welcome," he said, another pass-word, and I went on round the dark blue lino-tiles, turned at the corner to wave, but he'd shut the door. I doubled the envelope longwise into my inside pocket, no sense advertising it, and went on . . . then saw the photograph on the wall in line with the others, little plastic rectangle screwed to the frame :

PASTOR TERENCE LUCAS

Spitten-image of Keir Hardie too, same breed of man, something smiling about the eyes, must have been getting on when he died, seventy-five, eighty. Interesting to find out what he'd written about Dr. Kinman.

Anyway, I gave him a bit of a nod, made the lift . . . and down.

THE DOORS SLITHERED OPEN, AND THERE ACROSS THE TEN YARDS OF terrazzo, talking with the receptionist (trailings of indoor plants on the far wall, which I can't say I'd noticed before, hiding a patch of rough brickwork), was the secretary, Barbara, and she looked over, this sensible green dress on, then said something, and the receptionist looked over too, and they both smiled, less saved than human now, and as I walked over towards them she said something else to the receptionist—and then moved to cut off my way out through the glass-doors.

"Excuse me please," she said, "may I speak with you a moment?"

I bit on "Surely" and swallowed to dissemble or whatever. "Yes, of course." And by the way she turned to the world outside I twigged she wanted to talk without benefit of dictaphones or little peering eyes—and there must have been a good many would take in what I had in mind would come out. "Let's go and have a bite to eat," I said. "I'm hungry."

"Well," she said, "if you don't mind."

"With Luncheon Vouchers? I should mind." And they both gave it the Studio Audience treatment, but the receptionist hadn't missed a word. "Be my guest," I said to Barbara, and by the way she winced you could tell she wasn't used to eating with strange men, least of all within stoning range of the Sanhedrin. Anyway,

I helped open the door into the rejoicing wilderness of the square, the sun cheap at a tanner a time, and apples a pound pears.

Mind you, she kept her end up. "I'll let you have that pattern on Monday," she said to the little listening ears, "remind me," and only then did she come on out past me into the waiting snares of the world, the flesh, and Old Nick. No scent, no powder (not even talcum), no paint, just soap, water (probably cold at that), and Christianity—but then, it was within stoning range. And she could have done with something, looked clapped out, would have given her confidence.

I followed her down the three or four steps, still no word (Fred Epstein gone for his dinner), and we turned left along in my direction, and I did my gentleman-walk-on-the-outside act, she being the sort to notice a thing like that. And we walked for a bit past some of the architecture, lovely day, and she could have been a friend of Joan's, who had friends bobbing up all the time, never set eyes on most of them before, might be remembering her from a snap or something. . . .

At the corner of the square I bought a mid-day paper, had to know what they'd made of the demonstration, quite apart from how Glamorgan were getting on against Surrey at Cardiff, only needed 204. . . .

"Paper please," I said with the coppers in my hand.

"Star, News, Standard?" said the paper-seller, greasy old medal-ribbons up.

"So long as it's got cricket scores."

"The latest," he said, and gave me *The Star* (as was).

And we walked on for a bit more, there were trees, children, sparrows, other people . . . and round a couple of corners she perked up a bit. "Beautiful day."

"Where shall we eat?" I said.

"Somewhere you know if you don't mind, only—we'll . . ."

"Little peering eyes," I said, "little listening ears—I know, I've had some."

"Not quite so bad as that," but she laughed all the same.

"Right you are then. I know a place in Red Lion Street off Theobalds Road," and gave her a yard or two to get used to the idea—like with a hamster, slow movements and soft hands. "Fit?"

"Yes," she said.

"Was it about Dr. Kinman?"

"Yes," and she whistled up some more of what she thought was

necessary while we made the end of the street. "Are you a friend of his?"

And so, round the next square and along the next street, I told her the edited tale from there to breakfast-time (she posted the letters in the first box we saw)—and she listened, just the odd question at tactical moments, good questions, intelligent woman. "Are you?" I said.

"I don't know—all I know is my sister's going to marry him."

And this time we stayed walking to give me chance to get round to it. "When?" I said.

"I'm not sure really." Then, suddenly, the mice awake and scuttering again, "About three weeks I suppose, it's three weeks they'll have to wait, isn't it? Must be three weeks, and then he'll be my brother-in-law . . . and he's already got a little . . ." But switched off a bit quick.

"Cheer up," I said, and took her arm, and she let me. "I'm a married man myself, and it grows on you after a bit."

She gave a silly kind of smile, and I steered her into this caff, and the going in and sitting down and calling for tea. . . .

"No sugar in mine please," she said.

. . . egg, chips, peas, bread and butter twice, gave her half the chance she needed.

"I'm sorry," she said.

"That's all right," I said, "no bother."

We drank some tea while we waited for the rest of the Vouchers to shew up on plates, very lady-like she was and all, nothing spilled in the saucer, had one or two of the regulars looking at each other, winking, giving the nod.

"I know who you are now," she said, "I've been racking my brains. I've seen you at meetings in the old Central Hall with your wife—I know that Pauline mentioned Joan Bates, but I didn't connect."

"*Only connect*," I said, more to myself than her.

"Pardon?"

"Couldn't lead a double-life, could I? soon get rumbled."

She smiled, and you could tell she had herself more in hand now. "Acutally, I don't know your wife very well, only to speak to in passing—but Margaret, that's my sister, she does."

And that was it. "Margaret Moss?" And she nodded, almost eagerly. "I thought your face was familiar—you must be very like each other. Joan often mentions her, and we've got one of those

College group photographs knocking about somewhere, you know, all big smiles and new dresses."

"Dreadful, aren't they? especially when you look back."

"It's a small world," I said. "Joan will be tickled pink."

"No," she said, "I don't really think it is—it's just a small denomination."

She was obviously with it now, so I raised my game. "What do you think of him?"

"I don't know," she said, "I just don't know. He was in with Pastor this morning, and I just can't make up my mind about him at all. Actually, I'd never met him before, only heard about him, and he was such a nice, gentle sort of man, a bit sad, and yet—well . . ."

"Being secretary, you know the official story."

"Which is what I can't understand," she said, "and I've prayed so hard about it: the Brethren can hardly find a kind word for him, and yet Margaret and one or two others I've met who knew him, Mrs. Lucas now you—you all think he's not what he's been made out to be."

"I'm not sure myself yet," I said, "I haven't met him either—but too many of the right people dislike him. . . ."

But then our plates shewed up and we made a start, not that she said any Grace, just (and this was a strange thing), just clawed the yolk of her egg across with the fork, viciously I thought, the pale yolk bleeding, and then lashed on tomato-sauce—more in it than was obvious.

"Excellent chips," she said, "they've been freshly cooked."

"Tell me about your sister," I said.

"Not much to tell really," she said between mouthfuls, for all ones. "Margaret was going to go out to Africa to marry him long before there was any of this dreadful trouble. She's a nurse you know, ward sister, and all she's done is to wait for him, came down to London to be near the, er, prison, got a post at a hospital, and has just waited for him."

"Good for her," I said. "She older than you?"

"A year younger—I'm twenty-eight, she's twenty-seven."

Thirty, thirty-two? Shews what like of a judge I am. . . . But a woman who would tell you her age after no time at all could stand anything. "Any prospects yourself?" I said, "or are you set on Africa too?"

"And see all those black people all bare?" she said, and giggled,

the only word, though whether from embarrassment at being suspected of good works or at what she'd summoned up in the thickets of her mind I wasn't sure. "Besides, who would look after Mother and Father? someone's got to."

"There's ways and means—you've got your own life to live."

She laughed. "I'm not the marrying kind." Probably believed it.

And the chips were good, at that, just the job, though the fresh garden peas were tinned, and the butter was half *marge*.

"How do you know she's going through with it?" I said.

"She's told me. I see her practically every evening when she isn't on night-duty. She's only round the corner really, at Carshalton Hospital, so she's home most of her time off. We live at Wimbledon now, because Mother and Father sold up and moved down from Cambridge with the child when Margaret did, and I left my bed-sitter in Earls Court and went over to live with them so we could all be a family again for a little while before—well, before anything happens to Mother and Father. They've retired, of course, Father was a Local Government Officer in the Treasurer's Department, and it was an awful wrench their coming down here."

(And I noted "child" for future reference.)

"Is she seeing him today?"

"I really don't know," she said, "but I'd expect so, wouldn't you?"

Which wasn't the sort of question needed answering.

"You don't happen to know where he's going to stay or anything?"

"I think Margaret's been trying to find something for him out near the hospital, with a church member or something like that, but she wasn't hopeful. It's so awkward really."

"Did he say anything when he was in? I mean, did he know you were Margaret's sister?"

"Oh yes, but we really didn't get much chance as Pastor saw him at once, and wasn't any too pleased either—but he seemed such a nice man. And yet, there you are, there was the Mau Mau, and Dr. Janek's murder and everything—seems hard to understand."

"What did he want?"

"He said something to me about whatever money was due to him before all the trouble. Apparently, from what Margaret's told me, they were saving and so he'd hardly drawn on any of his account all the time he was with Dr. Janek, that's two years, and he was just saying how he perhaps might be entitled to that—but

Pastor came in and we didn't have much chance after that. . . . Pastor never expected him to come."

"Did he know about being kicked out of the Church?"

"It's never been what you could call officially announ^{ced}, although most people who know anything about it know that his name has been taken off the Church roll." She had the mice out and scuttering again. "Margaret must have told him, I suppose—she visited him every single fortnight you know, every other Wednesday afternoon, because she always used to come in to see me afterwards, had always been crying, always. She even went without her holidays. . . . She must love him, mustn't she?"

"Obviously," I said. "Care for another tea?" Had to change the subject otherwise she'd have been crying too, and the regulars wouldn't have stood for it.

But she had it in hand. "I ought really to be getting back, it must be ever so late."

"Never been late before?"

"I try not to be—it's stealing really, isn't it? stealing time."

"There's always a first time," I said, really thinking about something else, "and the first time's always the worst." And I called for two more, one without sugar. "There are no end of excuses for your conscience to feed on—the future of your kid sister, no end."

"Well . . ." she said, persuaded.

"Did Dr. Kinman get any money?"

"I don't think so. There were no cheques signed that I know of—unless Pastor gave him some out of his own pocket."

"That likely?"

"Oh yes! he's ever such a good man really, his bark's far worse than his bite."

"Believe that when I'd felt his bite."

"You're quite wrong about him, you know—he's one of the kindest and most considerate men going, kindness itself. He's helped ever such a lot of people, and not always when anyone else could know about it. He's helped me lots of times."

"Seems to me he's got a rather nasty little bee in his old-fashioned bonnet."

"You mean about Dr. Kinman?"

"That's part of it—the part that shews."

She smiled . . . but then our two teas turned up, and the plates

got cleared, and all the time she smiled to herself, and, smiling, she looked a girl again—and someone, somewhere, didn't know what he was missing.

"You mean about coloured people?" she said.

"That's the little bee," I said, "a dangerous little beast given half a chance. Ever heard of Hola? Sharpeville? Mulumbi?"

"He has his reasons," she said. "Can you pick up the first stone?" And then smiled at her unintentional pun.

"I know the only reason he's got—do you know what his name really is?"

"Steyn," she said. "His father was a Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa."

Which was the only trump I had well and truly set at naught, as chaff which the whirlwind carrieth away or something. "You knew then?"

"Of course, practically everybody does. He hasn't really made much of a secret about it, just changed his name by deed poll when he came here." She smiled some more. "After all, it's not the sort of thing you could keep secret long in our Church, now is it? You know, and you're not even a member."

"Has he kept his negro great-grandmother secret too?"

Which rattled her. "That's a horrible thing to say."

"Why?" I said, "why is it horrible?"

"It just is."

"*The Word was made flesh*," I said. "All men are brothers, remember?"

"Nobody else has ever said that about him—you've no proof, and it's quite horrible and wicked."

"Why else did he leave South Africa? change his name?" She shewed no sign of answering, probably thinking about being alone in a room all those times with a man who might be all black and bare under his clothes. "I'll tell you why," I said, "because he was probably the black sheep of the family."

"I don't know why he left," she said, "but it's horrible and wicked."

"He's in good company," I said. "Half the old Boer families in the Union have got a touch of the Bantu about them somewhere—great one for it, your Boer farmer: Bible in one hand, sjambok in the other, and a nice-looking negress, *umutsha* off at the ready, in the barn with the other cattle."

"You wouldn't like a thing like that said about you." But she

was enjoying it really, probably read the Song of Solomon in bed every night.

"Have you got a little bee too?"

"No," she said, "of course not—some of my best friends come from the West Indies, and they're ever such nice people." She drank some more tea, elbows on the table now, cupping her cup in her hands. "But supposing what you say is true—Pastor couldn't help having coloured blood."

"The only colour God made blood was red."

She finished the cup and put it down. "All I know is that he's a very kind man and I like him."

"I'd like him better if he had a bit more pride at having had a great-grandmother, instead of getting his own back on her the way he does."

"You've no proof at all," she said, "yet you keep on saying it."

"Nice tan he has."

"Don't keep saying such wicked things!" And one or two regulars looked round. "What about your precious Dr. Kinman joining Mau Mau?"

"That remains to be seen," I said, and we let it ride for a bit. . . .

"You'll find out about Pastor one day," she said, "then you might be sorry you said that." And we smiled, all passion suddenly spent. "But I really must be going now."

"Two more questions?" She nodded. "What's in that plywood box on top of the cabinet? It had me worried, couldn't think what."

"Ah!" she said, her face eager, "that's the bronze head of Dr. Janek which will be unveiled on Sunday. . . ."

And all sorts of half-set ideas and images dropped into pattern . . . top-heavy as . . .

"It's really going in the entrance eventually, up where they've got those climbing-plants hiding where the bracket will fit, but the unveiling will be in the Hall. Are you coming? Pastor Gould is to speak."

"The American?"

"He's flown over specially, and there's a rehearsal at three this afternoon, which is why I must get back, but it's on Sunday at three the proper thing." She smiled. "Big doings—why don't you?"

"I'll see, though what with carting the kids about . . ."

She stood up. "What else was it?"

"Did Dr. Kinman say where he was going?"

"No," she said, and smiled some more, and it was a smile and a half when she let it, "but why don't you phone Margaret?"

"That's a thumping good idea," I said. "Carshalton Hospital?"

"Yes," she said, and wrote the number in the Stop Press of my *Star* with a Biro from her bag, "Try about four-thirty, that's when they have tea."

"Thanks," I said, the *Best each-way bet* being CLIOBEL (3.30 Newmarket).

As she put her Biro back she took out her purse. "Let me pay for myself please," she said. "How much is it?" And she had it open ready, meant it, not like some of these anxious equal partners, want to pay so long as it doesn't cost them either love or money.

"Put it in the Missions plate on Sunday," I said, and handed over two Vouchers and what small extra there was to pay, and we went out into Red Lion Street and sunshine.

She held out her hand. "Thank you," she said, and we shook on it. "I hope everything will turn out for the best."

"No more than I do."

"Remember me to your wife," she said, smiled, turned, and went back along the way we had come, thick ankles—which need not be a disadvantage. Though a Mum and Dad the wrong side of seventy could be.

Then, as she turned round the far corner into Theobalds Road, it dawned on me that I'd forgotten to ask about the child I'd noted for future reference.

I WAS BACK AT WORK MYSELF AT TEN TO THREE, BUT FRIDAY WAS THE manager's day for lunch with Mr. Johnson, so I was laughing. Neither sight nor sound, bell nor buzzer from him till half past and gone, reason to laugh, even though he was understanding.

The first thing to scupper the laughter in my life was that the paper-seller, greasy medal-ribbons and all, had twisted me with a NOON EDITION, no more cricket in it than last night's close-of-play scores. Not even anything about Kinman getting out, the demonstration, nothing . . . though there was an Editorial about remembering Hiroshima :

FIFTEEN years ago today the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. There are few, even in America, who do not now regret it.

And about half-three it began to cloud over for the thundery rain in the offing. So I cast up the weekly ledger totals until half-four and gone, and then I phoned the number scribbled in the *Stop Press*.

"Carshalton Hospital," said a girl.

"Can I speak to Sister Moss please?"

"Hold the line please," and I held on through the clicks and whatever.

"E.N.T." said another girl, "Sister Moss speaking."

"This is Joan Bates's husband—your sister told me I'd probably get in touch with you about now."

She laughed. "Well," she said, obviously playing it safe and for time. "I've heard about you—and how is Joan these days? I hear she's expecting another."

"A week or so yet . . ." and we made conversation, this and that, until she must have gained time enough.

"You haven't just phoned out of the blue," she said. "Is it about Laurence?"

"Yes," I said, "have you seen him yet?"

"Did you mean what you wrote in your letters?" she said.

So I told her a less-edited version, and she listened, making little noises of assent every so often to let me know I wasn't talking to myself.

"He phoned me first thing this morning," she said, "just after seven, and I'm meeting him this evening when I go off duty."

"Good for you."

"I wanted to meet him this morning. . . . I wanted to . . . but . . ."

And tears were on the cards.

"Both of you care to come over to us tomorrow?" I said. "Tea or something?"

Too late, too late by a mile—I heard the first sob, and then she hung up.

SO I PUT THE LEDGERS AWAY IN THE CUPBOARD, GAVE HER TEN minutes, and tried again.

"I'm ever so sorry," she said, "I just couldn't help it."

"Happens all the time at our house—no bother."

"Look," she said, "I just can't chatter here like this, but I tell you what, you phone tonight about nine, and you can talk to him yourself."

"That's a date," and she gave me the number.

"He's told me all about your letters, and the postal order and everything—I don't know how to thank you."

"Me and the Good Samaritan. . . . Nine o'clock?"

"Thank you," and we tapered off, and hung up.

WE KNOCK OFF WORK AT OUR PLACE AT HALF-FIVE, AND IT'S ONLY A ten minute walk through the back-doubles of High Holborn, Drury Lane, Long Acre, Bow Street, Covent Garden, Henrietta Street, and the Strand to Charing Cross Station, a good fifteen, twenty by bus, but as the first train any good to me is the six-two, platform three, all stations to Bromley North, there's never any need to panic, never any need in the world—just a quiet stroll through the early evening at the violet hour or something, the evening hour that brings the middle-classes home to tea and fish-paste sandwiches, *Dunromin* until the eight-thirteen the next morning, in this case Monday.

But one thing about having so much time to be sparing is that you can at least get a seat, for be as late as ten to six when the train comes in and they'll be three and four deep on the platform and you'll stand all the way to Hither Green, but be in the front-rank and you'll get a seat. Mind you, it's awkward trying to read anything so big as an evening paper what with sixteen or more people standing where your legs are supposed to be, but you can manage if the need is great—like during Test Matches to get the latest. And I had this envelope burning a hole in my inside pocket.

August was, of course, for the people and their favourite islands, the annual fortnight, and so the crush wasn't so bad as all that—I bought an *Evening News*, and then not only got a seat, no bother, but a corner one at that, and managed to spread the back page enough to read that Glamorgan beat Surrey by 6 wickets, and that Clibbel wasn't even placed in the 3.30 at Newmarket. Tipsters!

But, by then, there were six standing, so I folded the paper on my lap and took out this envelope while I still had half a chance . . . and reading the first of those sheets of scruffy flimsy was a strange season. . . .

There were the slums and warehouses of South London skating by the dirty window I was jammed at, the occasional school, more churches than there were congregations for, new blocks of flats going up all over the place, a distance of roofs and chimneys and cranes, on down to the Surrey Docks where the river ran and sea-

tides brought ships (you could just see their masts and funnels behind the houses), all the lovely names they have out that way: Bermondsey, Rotherhithe, Deptford, Greenwich . . . and there I was with Kinman, conscience-deep in all the other lovely names they have elsewhere: Johannesburg, Sophiatown, Yumbala, Mulumbi . . . and all the agony and misery and inhumanity and love and joy and peace and truth those names stand for, that way and elsewhere.

First I had a dekkko to see what like of a page Mr. Stone could have whipped out, which wasn't hard on account they were numbered to 29, and 27 was missing—and on 23 was a list of committee members whose testimony on Brother Kinman was to follow: Brethren and Sisters R. Bailey, R. Sprigg, C. King, J. Galley, J. Thomson, and yes, there it was, P. Stone—the monkey had lifted his own tanner's worth of judgement.

Anyway, for the record, I re-read the letter from Kinman to his Dear Brethren turning down the appointment with Janek at Yumbala, and, in tenth or eleventh carbon, it seemed remote and aloof, and you couldn't really blame anyone who'd never read the original from getting it all wrong—nothing you could put into so many words, but there was something about his handwriting, something so child-like and trusting that made the meaning as guilty-sounding as only innocence can sometimes be. And this carbon blurred all that, flattened it into anonymity, condemned from the start.

Then there were a couple or three letters to and fro, Pastor to Pastor to Secretary to President, lot of words, best butter an inch thick, the meaning scraped on with a blunt knife, and just as quickly scraped off again:

Therefore, in view of the prevailing circumstances heretofore adumbrated, we heartily recommend our Brother into your care and keeping, with, however, the saving clauses spoken of by the Secretary in his covering letter to be ever kept in view . . .

And so on and so forth, unseasoned with any salt, but savage enough in the green wound for all the lack.

One short one from Pastor Lucas to the General Secretary and Treasurer came on page 3:

Sept. 30, '55.

Dear Brother Stone,

Your memo about Dr Kinman came to hand this morning. To me it is evident that he has a personal faith in a personal Saviour. As his other qualifications are more than adequate, what more can we ask of him? He is probably the best doctor we have in the Denomination in England, but if you know of a better I should be glad to hear. My heart warms to this man, because, right or wrong, he thinks for himself.

As for the possible effect upon the work at Yumbala you mentioned, I think we may safely leave this to the loving hands of Christ Jesus. The work is larger than any man in it, and I am certain that Janek has both the maturity and stature to be able to withstand the various onslaughts of twenty Kinmans. However, as you know, I do not share your estimate of either man. Leave it in the hands of God.

Your friend and brother in His Saving Name.
T. Lucas. President

Then, on page 4, along about New Cross, began the copy of:
A PRIMARY EVALUATION OF LAURENCE STANLEY KINMAN

And this was something I'd like to have seen in the original writing, probably unreadable with righteous anger, tidied up by a secretary, gone over with a Christian toothcomb, paragraphed by someone on the typing pool, and made to look real good by the electric machine—even in the copied state I had it in, it did a sweet job, though again, let us not say of what, lest we prejudge the judges, and overthrow them in stony places before they've had as much chance as Azazel.

PLACE OF ORIGIN . . . Headquarters, African
Assembly, Gathongo.

Date of issue.....February 24. 56.

SIGNATORY Pastor Fenton
Miller Gould, President.

DISTRIBUTION . . . President, Secretary,
British Congregation, Files.
NOT FOR PUBLICATION, DISTRIBUTION (Other than
as above).

Prestatement

In the compilation of this Primary Evaluation of Brother L. S. Kinman, as in the majority of others produced as an integral part of the process of Worker Assessment, the President has felt free to draw upon interview material and documents assembled by a Team of long-established Workers brought into being for this purpose. This Team consists of both European and indigenous Workers assigned this Assembly for periods in excess of ten years, selected on the basis of known ability in the technics of Evaluation, proven worth in the Missionary Field, and most emphatically not 'novices' as spoken of by the Apostle Paul in 1 Tim. 3. 6.

Additional data has been researched by the President in his Pastoral capacity, but presented with a bare minimum of Presidential commentary.

Data Upon Which This Evaluation Is Founded

One: This Worker was assigned this Assembly in the fall of 1955, October 10 as documented in the files of this Headquarters by the letter of assignment (see ref. below), and was scheduled for arrival via air transportation, Central African Airways, October 24 latest.

The necessary arrangements for his anticipated arrival, accommodation, and forward transportation in due course to Yumbala Missionary Hospital located in this Assembly, charge of Dr Stefan Janek, were initiated by this Headquarters. (ref. Brit. Appointments Comm. Sec. P. Stone. 55/10/K2)

Two: He reported this Headquarters November 30, late on assignment by 37 days. This

necessitated the cancellation of arrangements as above.

Three: His explanation tendered verbally with no adequate documentation was (a), That the original date of assignment was at error in that as by letter he had agreed to assignment at a date subsequent by 5 weeks to October 4, 6 latest;

(b), That verbally he had contracted to transportation via the sea-route to Cape Town, Union-Castle Mail Steamship Company thence via the overland route to this Headquarters.

In the light of the documentation cited at paragraph One above, this explanation was treated with reserve at this Headquarters.

Four: However, it must be herein stated that as his background acquaintance with the lingua franca of non-Europeans in the Yumbala area designated him, Swahili, was such, that, after personal counselling with the President, new arrangements for his forward transportation to Yumbala Missionary Hospital were initiated soonest, it otherwise being normal Denominational practice for incoming Workers to adjust to new language requirements at the discretion of the President.

Five: Whilst these new arrangements were being initiated Brother L. S. Kinman was made free of normal Denominational facilities and privileges. He responded to the latent challenge of this period in a totally unanticipated way by making a journey from Gathongo south through other territories assigned this Assembly to Johannesburg, specifically to certain Native Townships in that Location, namely Alexandra and Western Native Township, and by visiting with certain non-indigenous Missioners of another Denomination, namely the Anglican Community of the Resurrection.

It is not normal Denominational Policy to

make comment upon the policy and practices of the Missioners of any other Denomination in the World Field, but we are not without practical guidance in the day-to-day administration of our Work in that we have on Record the Voted Recommendations of the General Assembly in Council on this matter. We quote as promulgated July 16, 1947:

'Resolved, that this Denomination shall not in any way support nor encourage any Organization, Body, Church, nor Movement which seeks the establishment of the Kingdom Of God on earth by any other means than those Spiritual and in harmony with the Inspired Word of God as manifested in the Bible.'

By use of this Recommendation we of this Headquarters and Assembly have discerned that the above-cited Missioners fall within this category, and, whilst preserving true Christian charity, we have long since put it to our Workers in this Location that the best interests of the Denomination are not served by becoming associated in the non-European mind with the often praiseworthy projects of these Missioners.

This was likewise put to our Brother, but he rejected this challenge to his thinking for reasons which met with the Christian and Brotherly condemnation of all with whom he was counselled.

Furthermore, when the Voted Recommendation cited above was presented to the thinking of our Brother he refused admission to its validity to our Assembly situation, and is on Record as expressing admiration for a certain of the above-cited Missioners, subsequently expelled the Union, April 1956.

And then, right smack bang between this end of paragraph 5 and the beginning of 6, I had my aching feet trodden on by the standers and my fellow-sitters fighting their way out of the com-

partment at Hither Green . . . which gave the ten or so of us left a bit more room, nice-looking girl in a white blouse sitting opposite me reading *Woman's Own*, except she had hair dyed violet and shoes almost to match—violet! I ask you! So I skipped another page and a couple or three paragraphs and got to the bit that counted where it mattered. “

Evaluation of the Above Data

The President took time out to make repeated attempts to evaluate the Goal of this Worker, his general direction of Missionary purpose, and the Christian focal-point of his character-pattern.

Brother L. S. Kinman handled the interview sessions in an evasive manner which was indicative of motivation designed to reveal a minimum of character structure and total life-orientation, was cautious about soul-committal, and self-reliant to the detriment of group integration.

The President doubts that any conclusive judgement can be finalized at this stage to fully implement a written-up profile as is customary, but enough can be deduced from this Worker's extremely reserved behaviour pattern, his difficult and defensive temperament as evidenced throughout repeat-sessions, his highly individualized personality-structure, and small potential for Group co-operation, to point up the problems he will experience in adjusting and achieving autonomy in this milieu.

These attitudes do not evidence a correct Missionary motivation in line with our Divine leading in this direction, and in this he did not measure up to the Spiritual dimensions we have been led to regard as necessitate in our Workers.

Consequently, lacking that open-hearted response characteristic of the best of our Workers in this Field, making no basal

response to a repeated challenge to his thinking, and in the light of the Data upon which this Evaluation is founded as set forth in paragraphs One to Nine above, the President is compelled to document that he doubts this Worker's fitment for the 'Call made by Dr Stefan Janek from Yumbala Missionary Hospital to assist the Servicing of indigenous non-Europeans in that Area of this Assembly.

Dictated and Signed by Fenton Miller Gould,
President.

I reached these last few twists of the knife by three jolts from Grove Park, another rush out, slam slam, leaving me with this violet-haired girl, kept crossing and uncrossing her legs as she pretended to read, silk hissing over silk, knew what she was doing right enough, no bother, watching me beneath her mascara, though I was hardly her type -not at sixteen, seventeen she wasn't. So I opened the *Evening News* to look for the morning and all that caper :

KATANGA DEADLINE

LONDON COACH IN DEATH CRASH

'PETER FINCH TO PLAY CAESAR

Two sad men hold talks in Chelsea

PLOT WARDER JAILED

PAY DEMAND BY
CIVIL SERVANTS

And they had, page seven opposite the Classified Advertisements, photograph and all, and a good one at that :

The scene outside the prison this morning as demonstrators were turned back by police.

Not that you could really pick out anybody in particular, just the banners and the gates and the coppers, the banners touched-up so you could read the words, and this one face that could well have been JF, and, there again, might not have:

RELEASE OF MAU MAU DOCTOR

Demonstrators out in Force

Evening News Reporter

LAURENCE KINMAN, convicted for his part in Mau Mau terrorism was released this morning after serving his 2-year sentence.

Demonstrators waiting outside the prison with banners to voice their disapproval were moved on by the police, following a statement that he had been released earlier to prevent a disturbance.

Said a spokesman for the demonstrators: "This is typical. It is high time such convicted traitors knew how the general public feel about their activities. We are representative of no Political Party, but num-

ber housewives, clerks, shopkeepers, teachers, and working folk amongst our supporters. We intend to go on."

Dr. Kinman is linked in the public mind with the murder of Dr. Stefan Janek in the jungles of Kinyanjui during a sweep in search of surviving Mau Mau gangs in 1957. His destination is not known, but is believed to be the Midlands.

All he needed now was a press-cutting agency—he'd made the grade, and there were plenty of people around (both men and brethren) to make sure he skidded down it.

By which time we had jolted to Sundridge Park (the Golf Course, don't you know), and there was a gentle exodus of cricket and tennis club members who had to potter about in the City (don't you know) between games . . . and at Bromley North the rest of us got off, this girl leaning forward to do something unnecessary to her shoe rather longer than was necessary for me to see she had dandruff as well as a SureForm bra just like almost every other nicely brought-up girl on the train. But then, she was only sixteen, only sixteen, and sixteen is an exciting age to be, even these days.

So I winked to encourage her to grow up and live, or something, she blushed like the little pretty sweetening she was beneath the pennorth of *Woman's Own* she was wearing, and I got out before she did. . . .

AND THERE, RIGHT AT THE END OF THE PLATFORM BEHIND THE barrier, was Joan with the kids, and I waved the paper like I was at a Royal Wedding, and headed for Buckingham Palace gates with the best . . . and she soon saw me and said something to little Joan (at three the youngest—so far), who jumped up and down in her pushchair, then the other two (Kathleen nine and Betty six) saw me as well and waved and wriggled. . . .

"Thought we'd give you a surprise," Joan said from the permitted side.

"Hello, Daddy!" shouted the kids.

"Hello, everybody. . . ." And that was one of the moments made some of the hours worth it, and we pushed off through the Friday evening.

And Friday was always like practice night for Christmas Eve, what with Monday morning being three times round the other side of Brisbane . . . and we took up our marriage where we'd left it off that morning.

"Did you *you-know-what*?" said Joan.

"I clean forgot—there's been such a lot on."

So we stopped at the first sweetshop, loaded up with threepenny bars of this and that, sixpennorth of the other with nuts, a box of chocolates for the little woman in the clean apron, shoved an ice-cream cornet at each of them, and pushed off again, trailing what passes for happiness.

"How did you get on with Pastor Stone?" she said, and, in the relative peace and quiet until the last licks, I told her as much as I could. "I'm ever so pleased about Margaret Moss," she said a road or so later, "you'll like her—about time she was married."

"Sounded country," I said. "Cream, fresh eggs, and folk-songs. Not like her sister. What like of a wife will she make him?"

"What like of a husband will he make her?" she said, "that's what I'd like to know. What time did you say they're coming?"

"Won't know till I phone them."

"Hope we've got enough in—try to only make it tea they come for."

"We can always make it egg and chips."

"Give you a chance," she said, "and you'd live on egg and chips. . . . Funny you got on so well with Barbara—awkward sort of girl, been engaged to first one, then the other."

"Egg and chips," said one of the kids, "is that what's for tea?"

And there we were half-way down this road, landed with our parental responsibilities, or whatever.

SO WE HAD STORIES ALL THE REST OF THE WAY, A FINAL CANTER along the back-straight, Joan lumbering slowly, tickles to chase them into what we called home (terrace house done up cheap and cheerful, every wall and door a different colour), fed and watered

them (*For what we are about to receive*, in this case bread and home-made blackcurrant jam, and sponge cake, and cocoa, *may the Lord make us truly thankful, Amen*), switched on the radio at half-seven on account they were broadcasting the Prom Concert, Beethoven night, and (so help me) they began with *Fidelio*, the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, leader Paul Beard, conducted by Sir Malcolm himself—and there I was, outside the gates, all the banners, Beethoven's only opera, faithfulness, freedom, the noise good, especially at the end. . . .

"Turn that set down," said Joan, "you'll have the walls in on us."

"*And the walls came tumbling down*," sang the kids, them and Louis Armstrong.

So I did, just that bit, and then we bathed them in the kitchen-sink (we don't have a bath where we live, not in our rented house we don't), got them into their pyjamas (Piano Concerto No. 4—soloist Lamar Crowson), and up to bed in a laugh of tickles, more stories, and prayers.

"Who'd have children?" said Joan, as we cleared up the litter of living, had some tea ourselves, washed up the things (Symphony No. 7), and so went on with our life together, especially during the good bits. Then there was the last great golden blare, bang bang, and we switched off, only the News to come (this was when they had it at 9 o'clock), and I'd had enough news for one day. (And made what is known as a "mental note" to clear the top of the radio of all the junk and books and that.) .

"I think I'll just do some machining," she said, "only I've only got a few napkins left worth saving for the baby, the others are only good enough for rags now, so I bought some towelling in Medhurst's, good heavy stuff to stand the boiling, and I'll easily manage a dozen if I cut carefully."

So we settled down to a couple of hours of married life before we went to bed, though I was feeling a bit drowsy what with having been up since the last few cracks of dawn, she at the treadle-machine and me in the armchair with these sheets of scruffy flimsy.

"Shall I read some to you?" I said.

"When are you supposed to be phoning them?" she said.

Just like a woman, even a wife, wait till you're settled . . . and I upped. . . .

"Don't forget," she said, "try just to make it tea they come for."

And outed, just about getting dark, nearly a full moon, round the corner to the phone-box.

SOMEONE, A GIRL, HAD TO BE IN THERE FIRST OF COURSE, THE LAST twist of the knife, but she only kept me waiting eleven minutes by the clock in the Fish and Chip shop across the road.

"Sorry to, er, keep you," she said.

"That's all right," I said, and had a go myself . . . and got through, button A.

"Hello," said Margaret, "we've been expecting you."

"I got held up," and (so help me) I was nervous, mouth dry, palms sweating, the lot.

"Here you are," she said, "talk to Laurence."

"Hello," he said.

"Hello, Dr. Kinman, had a good day?"

"Thank you," he said. "I must apologize for having missed you this morning."

"Just as well you did. Some of the lunatic fringe were there as well."

"Yes, the Governor was kind enough to smuggle me out through the warders' quarters, though I did see something. . . . But I must thank you for your letters. . . ." Sounded on his best behaviour. "You can have small idea of what they meant to me, even though I hardly answered."

"You had someone better to write to."

And I heard a little laugh as though he'd squeezed her or something.

"One thing," he said, "your postal order came in most useful. Money was the one thing we'd both forgotten, everything else except that, and I couldn't have managed this morning without it. But we can settle that later."

"When can we expect you tomorrow?"

"Are you sure it won't be an inconvenience?"

"Come whenever you like."

"It's very kind of you both," he said. "I'll leave Margaret to arrange with you when. But one more thing—I wrote to you this morning over breakfast, as I wasn't sure if we would be able to find each other once I knew we'd missed."

"Me?" I said, "I'm a proper little terrier, woof woof."

He laughed, but not with it. "And now you have tracked me down?"

"I'm sorry," I said. "Me and my big mouth."

"No, please don't," he said. "Margaret tells me I read too much into things. . . . Don't I?" he said to her, and this man had the dogs at his heels. "But you arrange with her." Sounded glad to give her the phone.

"Hello," she said.

"What time can you?" I said. "Are you on duty at all?"

And so through the arrangements, they both liked egg and chips, so ten to one at Bromley South Station, how to get there from Carshalton, the lot.

"Thank you," she said. "Would you like to talk to Laurence again? he's here still."

"Time enough," I said. "You just bring him in good shape."

"I'll try," she said, just that edge of uncertainty to make it less than a joke.

"Love," I said, "it's wonderful," and we laughed, good-nighted, and hung up.

OF COURSE THERE WAS SOMEBODY WAITING, ONLY I KNEW HIM, MR. Palmer from next door, he and his wife and kids were the best neighbours we've ever had, do a hand's turn for anybody.

"Sorry, Mr. Palmer," I said, "you know how it is once you start talking."

"That's all right, mate," he said, "I'm in no tearing hurry."

And the fish and chips smelt just the job, so I went in and bought two pieces of rock salmon and a shilling of chips.

"Vinegar?" said the woman.

"The lot—tonight I dine with the Duchess."

"Any signs of the little stranger yet?" she said as she sprinkled, "only you know Nurse Lewis has bin knocked off, her push-bike by some lunatic in a car coming round Holmsdale Road sudden."

"She all right?"

"No, she's not too bad, shook up more than anything, but they kept her in Bromley Hospital."

"Not due for a week or so yet, ours," I said, "though you wait till it smells this lot—there'll be no holding it back."

"What do you want?" she said, "boy or girl?"

"Boy," I said, "too many women for comfort in our house."

"Easier to rear, lot less trouble than girls. But there, got to have what you get, like a lot of other things," and she gave me the bag.

"Each little one brings its own love," I said, and paid up and got out before she could find anything to throw at me.

"THOUGHT YOU'D LEFT HOME," SAID JOAN. "HOW DID YOU GET ON?"

So I told her, softened the blow about the two more for dinner by shoving the rock salmon on plates a bit quick, and we got eating.

"I shouldn't really be eating chips," she said, "but they are nice."

"Little of what you fancy," and they were, at that.

"Did Margaret sound happy?" she said. "Wish now I'd come with you."

"The happiness comes later."

"It'll be nice to see her again. Before we were married the last time was—must be."

"So long?"

"Don't be horrible," she said. "We're the same age you know, except her birthday's in the October and mine's in September."

"Don't drop her," I said, "you'll get a present."

"What a difference there's been between our two lives though."

"Regret it?" I said . . . and we hung up one of the occasional pearls.

ANYWAY, THE PLATES WASHED, WE SETTLED DOWN AGAIN TO THIS last hour before we went to bed, she at the treadle-machine with the napkins, and me in the armchair with these sheets of scruffy flimsy.

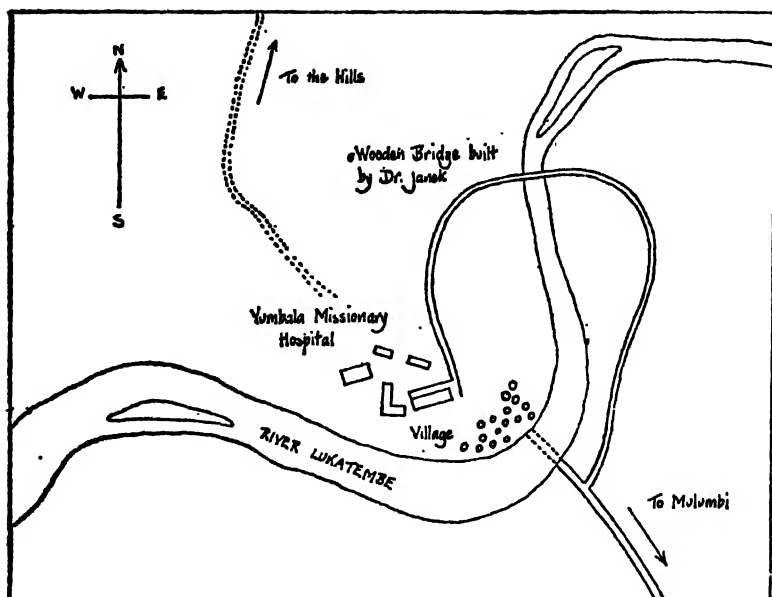
"I won't bother about reading any to you then?" I said.

"No," she said, and grinned, "I'll get to hear it sooner or later—let me get on, I've got ever such a lot to do."

So I found where Fenton Miller Gould, President African Assembly, had finished Evaluating the Above Data, and took it from there—and the next page got down to the oil-bearing reef, bang bang, just like that :

Transcription of Two Handwritten Letters sent to the President, African Assembly, by Dr Stefan Janek, re Brother L. S. Kinman.

(A sketch-map has been appended here for the elucidation of the points enumerated by Dr Janek. It is based on information provided by Sister Ruth Dean.)



You could practically hear them holding their breath. . . .
“Hush, hush, quiet for your life—Dr. S. Janek is twisting the knife.” And from what I remembered of his sprawling flaunt of a signature I’d seen reproduced somewhere, this was something else I’d have liked to have seen in the original explosion, must have been quite something even tamped down on account he had written it in what passed for English—in Polish he would have skinned the cat:

The Day of the Conversion of Paul,

To Dear Brother President,

As you know by your good files it is not many times I concern you with the burden of my daily labour here at Yumbala, but I feel strongly to tell you the matter of sending me Brother Kinman as helper who came here in the second week December with the rain.

I made in my letter to you the quest for the younger man to join me to take some of

the heat of day, that he should firstly a good doctor with clinical and surgical and medical experience, and he should be willing to fall in with my little ways which are not unreasonable in the long time as they see at first time. I am getting an older man and no more so easy to bend some people hope, but my ways are you know, when you came I explained, the sum of ten year labour in Yumbala, one of the not so good places in all the dark continent where there are many sickness.

I can have nothing to tell you concern of Brother Kinman as a doctor, because firstly as a doctor he is good regards the clinical and surgical and medical experience, and good with pregnancy and gynecology which I am not good with, but not with rich experience I have tropical medicine in all branches, but Brother Kinman is good for strong labour we want and he harvest more experience daily of which Yumbala is rich in all branches.

But about Brother Kinman as the person not easy for me to fall with my little ways, I hope I am to explain.

Brother Kinman is the younger man and I am quick to forgive forget as the Father which art in Heaven, all things the virtue of the younger man, as strong for labour, long time to labour more and such matters. I made in my letter to you the quest for the younger man should have these virtue as more needed all time as Yumbala so hard for labour, the native so primitive with many sickness, and the native getting all time hard to service with Mau Mau here you talk it is. I came to Yumbala for the so primitive with not all things we in Europe America talk so needed. I renounced so many these things in Europe America to come Yumbala, I understand, to love. Brother Kinman I tell you is strong in such matter, the gift of the Father.

But about Brother Kinman as the person not easy for me to fall with my little ways, I hope to concern you with the burden, I feel my words in such matter be important with you if you treasure labour here, for Brother Kinman is not the person for the labour I had quest for in my letter to you. I am getting an older man and the right man should be in Yumbala when the time comes to put down my daily labour, as come to all sooner later.

The best to tell you about what is this matter to concern, firstly when Brother Kinman came here in the second week December with the rain, and when Brother Kinman talk against my word about native I was angry with. The native call by Adam Kumali when you came, dispenser.

As you know by your good files about when you came the President to Yumbala, there are two ways to Yumbala from Mulumbi 50 kilometers. One to go round by wood bridge I make over river Lukatembe when I came to Yumbala firstly. Two to go by native ford down straight from Mulumbi over river Lukatembe which I tell you is less 15 kilometers but not so good way as I now explain not.

I tell you firstly it is not so good because it is not good the labour be at mercy of some logs which are mahogany in the river Lukatembe taking turn by turn with cattle, some sick with many sickness, also native come to market. I tell you it is not safe, the logs are tied and there are some mistakes every week and month, more and more and the supply boxes from Mulumbi . . .

"One thing about Margaret," said Joan, "unlike Barbara, she's got a good sense of humour."

"She'll probably need it," I said. "There's not likely to be much of a humorous future in front of her."

"Wish I knew the truth about Laurie. He used to be such a nice person when he was up home, used to play with all us children at the Christmas Party at the Church even when he was old enough to be courting, always so considerate to his parents and everything, never any side though becoming a doctor was a cut above his part of Hanley."

"You've seen the Church in action at closer quarters than I have."

"They've done some pretty doubtful things," she said. "But it wasn't the Church found him guilty of Mau Mau and everything."

"No comment," I said, and she started another napkin :

. . . the supply boxes from Mulumbi you send are more worth than logs breaking, and other mistakes happen. I have emergency patients every week and month, and it is not good taking turn by turn with cattle, also native with pig chicken to market.

I command we are not to go by ford but go round wood bridge 15 kilometers more. No worker in Hospital black and white. There are also flood which come quickly when there is the rain in the hill and mountain. I see every month and month for ten year the river Lukatembe get deep than by a man, and the native ford broken with flood. I make the wood bridge where river Lukatembe not so wide, strong in flood, and all explained to all worker in Yumbala, black and white that it is better to getting wet from the rain by wood bridge than drown by river Lukatembe as haste is not speed, and 15 kilometers is not worth the supply boxes from Mulumbi you send. Cattle also native drown every month and month and year when flood come and I command the native ford forbidden.

This I tell Brother Kinman when he come here, which is not unreasonable in the long time as it see, and Brother Kinman should do it. But when I send Brother Kinman to Mulumbi firstly for the supply boxes . . .

"There was the time they took that man off the Church Roll at Lewisham," she said, "that was pretty doubtful."

"Every time I stop to turn over," I said, "you get a word in sideways."

"Got to in this house, never get a chance otherwise."

"And me in the middle of Africa and all. . . . This man, Brother Kennedy. What did you call it? doubtful?"

"Thought that would raise a spark," she said. "No, but there were a lot of members thought it ought to have come before the Church as it should have done. . . ."

I put on the voice of an Elder before the people. "But the Board, in view of all the circumstances, have decided that it will not be in the best interests of the membership to drag this unsavoury business before them—we must remember the tender young lambs of the flock, brethren and sisters, we must ever remember them." And laughed, nasty as I felt. "Cover it up, hide it, keep it dark—no Christian *ever* carries on with a woman, but when he gets caught we must get him out of the Church as quickly and quietly as possible, send a memo to Christ, and hope He'll do the same in the records of heaven. What is it? double-entry book-keeping?"

"You must admit it was pretty sordid," she said.

"True, it had everything, but the Church Manual I'm told so much about says that a name can only be taken off the Roll by a vote of the Church."

"What could they have done? It was dreadful the things he was doing."

"Vote."

"Even though it means having things brought out that never would get out? dreadful things?"

"Truth can stand the light of day," I said.

"No," she said, "some things are best left in the dark where they happen."

"Eloquent tonight, aren't we?"

"You need standing up to," she said. "If I didn't once in a while you'd have it all your own way."

"There's Church Boards about need standing up to, and I don't see many people standing."

She grinned. "We talking about Lewisham or Laurie?"

"Does it matter which?" I said. "Same meat, different gravy."

And she started hemming again to shut me up:

But when I send Brother Kinman to Mulumbi firstly for the supply boxes, Brother Kinman comes from Mulumbi in the truck by native ford. Brother Kinman explain the rain coming quickly on black cloud and the truck a wheel puncture, slow and it not so good to have the night in the rain all wet, the supply boxes not wood as every time but cardboard, but I command, and Brother Kinman talk against my word. I tell you Brother Kinman was this time safe to come by native ford, but Brother Kinman should not as native quickly see my word broken, and is better all be lost, supply boxes, truck than my word be broken with native.

But also more important is the matter when Brother talk against my word about Adam Kumali, dispenser I was angry about.

This Adam Kumali had school in Yumbala five year and good dispenser, more brain, other child of nature, many, but thief. This Adam Kumali take medical supply and give to native without my word many week and month. I hope I am not with wrong pride to know, to understand, but native is child and the child understand nothing but I command. I know, understand the native have no love, respect to we Europeans but we tell native all time do this do that do all. We the master, command. Native will not labour long time strongly, not speak true and thief. I tell you native not tell true to we Europeans but lie, and take medical supply and too, everything, all thief but I watch. This is hard true, but true. This Adam Kumali take medical supply and give to native without my word before Brother Kinman come to Yumbala and Adam Kumali promise, but do again, and I punish but Brother Kinman talk against my word and Adam Kumali make to hill and mountain when I send to police. More worth of medical

supply Adam Kumali take in all time than one month and I was angry for there are more thief with native if Adam Kumali not punish.

I tell you Brother President that Brother Kinman should not . . .

"Supposing it is all true about Laurie," she said, "might the Brethren have not done the right thing in not having a Church vote upon it?"

"From their point of view the less said the better. But suppose it isn't all true about him?"

"It wasn't the Church found him guilty." She grimaced. "Mau Mau."

"When colonial people fight for their freedom we call it nasty names—terrorism, Eoka, Mau Mau, anything. They call it patriotism."

"Whatever it was, he never denied joining them."

"He was with them," I said.

"Well all right," she said, "I'll give you that—why did he stay with them?"

"Fat chance he'd have had of getting away if they didn't want to let him go—we'll see tomorrow."

She stopped fiddling with the gadgets, threading the bobbin or something. "You're not just going to ask him straight out?"

"Why not?" and knew something was in the wind.

"Well," she said, "it's not that I don't like him or anything, but to tell the truth I don't really see why we had to ask him to stay here."

Which was news to me, and I let her make the running.

"It might get ever so embarrassing," she said, "especially if you go on the way you usually do, arguing—and, for another thing, he used to be ever so shy and it wouldn't be fair, asking him straight out."

"We could do with people like you on Church Boards," I said, "just the right Christian attitude: feed the well-fed, clothe those with six suits, take-in those who've already got a semi-detached . . ."

"No," she said, "we must help him, it's the least we can do for all sorts of reasons, for Margaret, my knowing him and everything, and I'm glad we sent him the money and that he's coming to dinner—but, knowing you, I don't think it's really a very good idea him staying here."

"First you've said about it."

"I didn't like to before, you seemed so set upon it. And then . . . but I don't know, I don't know what to think."

"Listen, Joan," I said, "do you believe the official yarn?"

"I don't know what to believe," she said, "I keep saying that. I really don't know—it all sounds so unlike him, and yet it must be true."

"Asking him's one of the ways of finding out."

She fiddled a bit more, going through the motions without looking.

"All I ask," she said, "is that you won't quarrel with him."

"Me?" I said. "This is a man on the same side as I am, and you want me not to quarrel with him! We'll probably end up founding a new Anarchist Brotherhood."

"All the same," she said, "promise."

"All right," I said, "cross my heart and swear to die."

"I'm not looking forward to it," she said. "I mean, how long is he likely to stay? We can't put him up for ever."

"We'll find out tomorrow—I'll take him a walk, and you can gas with her."

"We'll see," she said. And then, "I'll just finish this one, and then I'll make the cocoa and we can go to bed—you must be ever so tired."

"I hope the children of nature haven't had a dirty great big black hand in the grooving of the cocoa, on account I wouldn't want to cross a Church Board on a matter of principle."

"What are you on about?" she said, but, like jesting Pilate, wouldn't stop hemming for an answer:

I tell you Brother President that Brother Kinman should not be judge in such matter, we Europeans must command native, the child understand nothing of Brother, but have no love respect for such. Many Europeans hope this true not true, but they live Europe and we in Yumbala. This primitive mind not understand free and Brother, but must have master to command, and when this child grow to man then the time for free not now. This Adam Kumali is such and Brother Kinman not understand.

I tell you Brother President for this reason Brother Kinman is not the person for the labour I had quest for in my letter to you. I tell you I can have nothing to tell you concern of Brother Kinman as doctor but as person not easy for me to fall with my little ways.

I hope I am not with wrong hope you will have him back again for other places and I quest you again you send other doctor to come in Yumbala to take heat of day.

I thank you Dear Brother President.

Stefan Vladimir Janek.

"Read the rest tomorrow," she said, "you must be very tired."

"Every time I stop you get . . ."

"Don't argue—and you make the cocoa, I haven't quite finished."

So I folded the sheets of scruffy flimsy back into the envelope on account I was tired, at that, and looked for a place to shove the lot for the night—and found it in the nearest book handy, one from on top of our battered old radio . . . and (so help me) it happened to be *Days With Dr. Janek in Yumbala*, by Fenton Miller Gould, 1/6d. at a Church Jumble Sale some years ago and given to the kids for the sake of the pictures, only I'd pinched it back a while since to get into likely shape of mind to take up with Kinman . . . one of these squarish arty books on shiny paper, photographs galore and a commentary which fits in where it can, up, down, left, right, and sometimes centre: *You Must Add This Thrilling Volume To Your Personal Home Library Of Spiritual Treasures*. And I couldn't help but flip a few pages, even after being crayoned-in and mauled about by the kids there was still this good smell that kind of shiny paper has—not that I was sold on the book, even at 1/6d., but that I *had* been on the man one time of day before I began to read between his lines:

Dr. Janek is here seen performing an Emergency Operation upon a Little Girl who has unfortunately been badly burned rolling into the still glowing embers of the cooking fire around which Natives sleep at night to keep warm in the bitterly cold nights of the Yumbala Region. You will be glad to know that the Little Girl was brought to a Full Recovery by Dr. Janek and has now Embraced the Message of Salvation of which she would never have heard had it not been through the Vision of the Famous Doctor.

And there he was, the Famous Doctor in person, without mask, without surgical gloves, bending over a sheeted mound of which nothing human could be seen, might as well have been a bolster . . . the well-known face deeply concerned, compassionate, the drooping lower-lip drawn-in with studied gravity, but no sign of the famous radiation burn across the left cheek ("*an accident involving a nuclear reactor in the United States*"—though, as they say, "*the full story has yet to be revealed*"), probably painted out in the negative—after all, it was a book intended for old ladies of both sexes and all ages . . . the two native nurses out of focus, but smiling happily, glad to be of some small help, and so near the Famous Doctor.

Dr. Janek alone at night in his Simple Quarters writing one of the Many Books which have made him Famous the Whole Wide World Around.

Alone, that is, except for Fenton Miller Gould, a photographer, and the umpteen Readers who had Responded to the Challenge to Add This Thrilling Volume to their Personal Home Library Of Spiritual Treasures at the Special Price of \$7.50 . . .

"Come on," said Joan, "it's getting ever so late."

"All right," I said, and closed up on Dr. Janek Preaching the Word of God to the Savage Warriors of the Baluka Tribe in Full War Paint and Persuading them to Forsake their Primitive Pagan Ways of Sin and Follow after Christ Jesus Who So Loved them as to Die on Calvary's Tree for their Sins . . . and shoved the book back on top of the radio, went out into the kitchen, brewed-up—and, two mugs later (sweet, hot, and thick enough to float the spoon), I locked-up, we looked at the kids, and went to bed, glad to, at that . . . beautiful moon, high behind the gas-werks, clouds drifting . . . dreams ceasing.

SATURDAY

6

A new commandment I give
unto you, That ye love one
another; as I have loved you,
that ye also love one another.

ST. JOHN 13:35

THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT THING NEXT MORNING, BEING SATURDAY with no panic to be at this place ten minutes walk from Holborn Viaduct at half-nine, and apart from being kidded out of bed at half-seven for stories, tickles, the need for food and drink (*For what we are about to receive*, in this case Shredded Wheat and milk, fried bread and egg, and bread and home-made blackcurrant jam, and milk to drink, and treacle-toffee for being good, *may the Lord make us truly thankful, Amen*), and all the other things involved in being human, was this letter from Kinman. . . .

"But one more thing," he had said, "I wrote to you this morning . . ."

. . . and there it was on the mat at rising nine, ratatat-tat, nothing else except the receipt for the electricity bill: PAID WITH THANKS.

The same rounded handwriting, yes, but this time in pencil, starting sharp and getting thicker and thicker, not so even either, bit shaky, and on the kind of paper you get six folded sheets of with envelopes to match for a tanner from a newsagent's on the corner down every way in London :

My Dear Brother,

Thank you very much for your last letter. It was handed to me, along with its postal order for £1, by the Governor just before my discharge this morning. The regulations governing the receipt of letters are administered with varying degrees of strictness, and I am afraid that my conduct has not been such as to encourage

leniency towards me in this direction. This also explains why I have not written more often in answer. Please do not construe this administration as being one of undue harshness, for I am uneasy to add such choice fuel to your flame, but rather read into it the action of an Official doing his best with a not very coöperative prisoner, for he has this morning been kind enough to slip me out through the Warders' quarters to avoid some unpleasantness he feared was brewing on my account. Nobody could have been more considerate towards me within the limits of regulations not drawn up by himself.

The postal order was, to be quite honest, more welcome than the letter as it enabled me to refuse the small grant of money which otherwise I would have been obliged to accept, and I have just paid for my breakfast with part of it as the owner of this little place in which I am writing has been kind enough to cash it for me, otherwise I would have been dished. But she had a kind face.

One of the unforeseen results of the Governor's kindness has been that I have missed you, because he warned me that the unpleasantness which awaited me was really beyond his jurisdiction and that if I chose to subject myself to it then I would only have myself to blame. I have been watching the small crowd and I thought I could perhaps walk up and down nearby in the hopes that you might recognize me, for remember I have no idea what you look like, whereas there was a greater chance of you knowing me. But then it occurred to me that if you might recognize me so also might the others, and I am not a brave man and I withdrew.

All I can do now is to write this letter of apology for having missed you; to thank you again most sincerely for your initial thought in writing to me and for your continuing letters; for the postal order, which, incidentally, I will repay so soon as I can negotiate the payment of certain monies owing me; for your kind offer of temporary accommodation; and to let you have the following address by which you should be able to reach me should you so desire. Please believe me, my brother, but you can have small idea of what these things have meant to me.

Thank you again, and may God bless you and your family.

Yours faithfully,

L. S. Kinman.

And then he gave this address in Carshalton.

"What does he say?" said Joan.

"He wants to thrust debased negrophilism upon us, that and obscene and unspeakable barbarism."

"What?" she said. "Here, give it to me."

So I did, and she read it.

"I don't know what to believe," she said, "I really and truly don't."

"Seems to me to be either a saint or a two-faced twister."

"Who, Daddy?" said one of the kids—and there we were, elbow-deep in what was left of breakfast, landed with our parental whatevers again.

So we brushed their teeth and washed their ears and everything else we could lay hands on, dressed them and shod them, and combed their hair. . . .

"Take them with you for the bike," said Joan, "leave me in peace to get ready. What time did you say they were coming?"

"Ten to one at Bromley South Station—I'll bring this lot home first, and then go to meet them."

"Can we go to Keston on the motor-bike, please?" said one of the kids.

"We'll see," I said, which meant "yes" the way we carried on, and they nearly knocked me over getting out the frontdoor.

"The money's on the mantelpiece," said Joan. "You don't know the relief having you all out of the way for a change. Roll on week-ends."

So I took the two pound five from underneath the alarm-clock, gave her a dutiful kiss (and a couple of good runs for luck), and went out into the morning and milkman streets to catch up with the prancing kids.

"Better leave two extra pints," I said to him; "we've got company coming."

"You're on," he said. "Backed any winners lately?"

"Me?" I said, "and use milk-bottle tops?"

He laughed. "How's the wife?"

So we cantered a furlong or so in the man's world . . . and then I caught up with the kids at the corner.

"Come on," I said, "if it's ready we'll go."

IT WAS.

"Gear-dog," said the man, wiping his hands clean for the money, "she'll be all right now."

"How much?" I said.

"Forty-five bob."

"Comes expensive."

"I put you a new cable in," he said, "oil-change, and touched-up your brakes while I was at it—needed doing bad."

"Two five," I said, and gave it to him—and it rang on the till, chink chink.

ON THE ROAD, SHE STARTED SECOND TIME, THE KIDS PILED INTO THE sidecar, we topped-up with petrol at the first place we came to, and off we went, bang bang, with that singing feeling of independence.

Of course, once on the go, we had all the usual drivers all over the murderous place . . . a bloke with a great big moustache in a Renault Dauphine, brand-cruising new, shot from behind out of nowhere going up Masons Hill by the hospital, cut in front of me and an Austin A.55 and turned sharp squealing left into Holmsdale Road without so much as a signal. And there was a plump character in a Jaguar Automatic Status Symbol . . .

BUT WE SURVIVED, AND, EVEN THOUGH THE JETS WERE WHINING all over the sky from Biggin Hill, rehearsing the war or playing-back the Battle of Britain or whatever, Keston was, as always, one of the places: pine trees, gnarled roots, gorse, the two lakes, water-lilies, blackbirds, swans and ducks and all, and the kids had a rare old time.

STILL, AT TWELVE I CALLED THEM IN FROM CULLING THE STONES they had been ducks-and-draking across the lower lake (one of them, running, tripped over a root and grazed her knee, and we had a bit of a weep and handkerchief first-aid), and then an them home the way we had come.

"What's for dinner, Mummy?" they shouted round us.

"Kippers and custard," said Joan, and didn't look so tired with not having had them under her feet all morning. "How was the bike? And what's wrong with Kath's knee?"

"Went like a bird," I said, "think I'll bring them in on it. . . . She fell over running."

"I wouldn't if I were you," she said, "only Margaret'll probably have a new dress on and she won't want to be clambering about in that grubby old contraption." And was leading a tearful wounded soldier to the sink.

So I left the bike in the road outside the front-gate as usual, and walked around back to Bromley South Station, and made it easy, ten to one spot on.

NOT THAT THEY WERE THERE, PEOPLE NEVER ARE, SO I SAT DOWN ON one of the free democratic seats they have in the entrance by where you get your tickets, and watched points, the comings and goings, the people, yes, the greatest show on earth.

And at five to she came, and did have a new dress on, looked a very good home-made, light red candy-stripe cotton with white cuffs and collar even though the weather wasn't all that good (remember August?), recognized her at once, another Barbara only with good ankles and a vigorous figure, you could have seen she was a nurse without knowing, had that starched no-nonsense turn-over look, but on a face used to grinning and spoiling the effect. Stood in at the doors looking round without seeing me, not that she could have known what to look for, and you could tell she had a lot obviously on her mind, more than was good for anyone. Must have been quite a time she'd had the last couple of years, there being other cages than those run by the Prison Commissioners, bless their little iron bars.

So I stood up and made the move, and she saw me, and I waved, and she came on over towards me, smiling, but dead worried.

"Hello," she said. "I'm most awfully sorry."

"That's all right," I said, "what's five minutes in a lifetime?"

She had enough left to skip the frills. "He's just outside, but—well, he's imagining that everybody knows all about him. We would have been early, but he's been having to screw up his courage to come—it's been as much as I could do to get him this far, it really has."

"Happens to me all the time—but hadn't we, er, better . . ." And I did my gentleman act and ushered her out into crowded High Street.

"It's not just coming over to see you," she said, and she had this clean smell of Germolene as she stepped past me, "but just coming out at all. We were at my mother's later last night, and we were silly enough to have left one of the morning papers about, and he read what they wrote about him, it was horrible—and then those people waiting yesterday. He had no idea, and it's worried him ever such a lot."

"They all feel like that at first, I'm told."

Through a family lugging their cases towards the station, Hastings for two weeks, Brighton, Herne Bay. . . .

"If we could only get him over that," she said.

Past the Home-Made Cake Shop, and the Record Bar. . . .

"There he is," she said, and pointed up the High Street. "I do hope that . . ." But didn't finish, probably couldn't.

Past the butcher's (capons all nicely frozen for the week-end rush), the optician's, Last's the secondhand bookshop . . . and this was it, the Aristotelian moment or whatever.

HE WAS LOOKING AT THE ADVERTISEMENTS (FROM WHENCE COMETH most of our bargains) on the board outside Wyman's the stationers, his back to the crowd, tall, dark suit . . . the interesting sort of character I'd seen in the back room of the caff yesterday morning!

He saw us coming, and turned, hesitated just that bit, and then seemed to remember me, and it was, the suit pressed now, looking old enough to be my father for all the mere three or four years between us on paper, but it was the same man, and no mistake—what a turn-up for the book! And he smiled and came to meet us, surprisingly pale in a yellowy kind of way, intensely blue eyes, good face, bit like Trevor Howard, and he was obviously shy as a child, and she was fumbling and all nervous smiles.

"Laurence," she said, "this . . ."

"I believe I know," he said. "How very remarkable."

And we two laughed, and shook on it, and his hand was as damp as Mr. Stone's had been, but for a different reason . . . but then, almost at once, he began to glance at the people passing, not much, but enough to tell what a state he was in.

"Come on," I said, "we'll make the big trek," and I managed to keep him on the inside lane back down the High Street the way we had come, and then slide off into the back-doubles home—with us walking along trying not to notice the way he was trying not to be noticed.

But once out of the crowd he seemed to lose some of the dogs, and she saw it too, though still not saying anything.

"You know," I said, "if I hadn't been on the watch for you across the road, I'd have come and sat at that table—you looked an interesting sort of character."

"Did you get my letter?" he said. "I must have been writing it at that very minute."

"Will someone kindly tell me, please?" she said.

So we told her . . . and that was the beginning, couldn't put much of a foot wrong from there, and we filled in the walk back home with this, that, and the weather we were having for the time of year, such a lot of it—and she was smiling and holding his hand like sixteen was a good age to be even though you were twenty-seven, twenty-eight in October, and even though it was more for his sake than her own.

AND WE MADE IT IN GOOD ORDER, NOTHING SIGNIFICANT SAID, BUT enough to keep the dogs back . . . and there was our road, the bike outside, and the kids were hanging all over the front-gate, saw us coming and charged down the street to meet us, the wounded soldier limping in the rear, game but still handkerchiefed.

"Hello," they said.

"This is Dr. Kinman I've told you about," I said, "and this is Miss Moss."

"Have you come to help with the baby?" one of them said.

"No, my dear," he said. "At least, I hope not."

"Aren't you very good helping with babies then?"

"I believe I could probably manage, but I'm a little out of practice."

"Oh," they said, and that was enough to last them a bit, and they hared off back, galloping all three.

"I'm thankful I haven't got a little black bag with me," he said.

"I fear it would do considerable harm to your training."

"You should see the gooseberry bushes on our allotment," I said, and we laughed, reached the gate twenty lengths behind the leaders, and in through that and the open frontdoor.

JOAN WAS AT THE OVEN LOOKING AT WHAT I KNEW WOULD BE A lemon-pie, always made a lemon-pie when we had visitors on account she was a dab-hand at it, that and sausage-rolls.

"Hello, Margaret," she said, "how nice to see you."

"You're looking very well," said Margaret, but something was even more on the cards, and Joan began to wipe her hands on the tea-towel—but too late, too late by a mile, and, as well as she could for her shape, she took Margaret to her arms as the misery and joy racked up . . . gave us lot marching orders a bit quick with her eyes, and I got the kids out and shut the door, could still hear the sobs though, break your heart they would, dry, no tears.

"What's the matter with the lady?" said one of the kids, so I

gave them a couple of bob to run out and buy some icecream at Rimmer's for afters, and got rid of them for the twenty-two point seven seconds it would take to fetch.

"I've got no right to do this to her," he said, "none at all."

"Don't talk wet, man," I said. "Give us a hand with this table."

"Two years," he said, "she came once every fortnight. . . ."

"Every other Wednesday," and he obviously didn't know I knew that much.

"Never missed once, I couldn't have gone on if she hadn't—but she never cried before, was always so cheerful even in that place." And wasn't far from the water-works himself, all we needed.

"She did her crying afterwards," I said, "it's their way. You and your two years without remission for good conduct, that's your way, her and a wet handkerchief every other Wednesday when she'd finished seeing you, that's hers."

"I've no right," he said. "What's her anguish to . . ."

"Save it for now," I said, "here comes the icecream."

He smiled, knew when he was being managed. "Sorry."

"Got to be quick in this house."

"Neapolitan!" shouted the kids from down the passage.

"Can we, er, do anything about—well, them?" he said.

"They'll come in their own time," I said.

And there we were, right in the middle of two bobs' worth of the Neapolitan Family Size.

SO WE GOT THEM ON TO SETTING THE TABLE, KNIVES, FORKS, SPOONS, and the paper serviettes they always made when we had visitors—and then Joan came out of the kitchen.

"She's having a bit of a wash to freshen-up," she said to the unasked question, "she'll be all right."

In the sink of course, and it was just as well she was a nurse, practical, on account we've only got an outside lav too.

"Thank you," he said, "it's more than kind."

"Don't thank me," she said, "thank her—make a bit of fuss of her when she comes out."

"Well . . ." he said, and, after all, there *were* three kids about.

"Don't mind them," I said, "they're used to it."

But you could tell it had him worried, and I can't say I blamed him—he'd only been out a day, and didn't look the demonstrative type either, not even in private. Not only that, the Denomination

had a word for it too . . . though there had been that little laugh on the phone last night. . . .

"Kath has been a silly girl," said Joan to change the subject, and the poor kid wriggled towards tears, "she won't even let me look at her knee."

"It'll get poison," said one of the others.

"It won't! so there!"

"Perhaps I might have a little look," he said, and this was something different, a real live doctor, and Kath wriggled some more, only a different wriggle, pride and curiosity and being a female and all. "May I? because I know a little girl just about your age. . . ."

And the blush said "yes" . . . and then Margaret came out from the kitchen with a stack of dinner-plates, looked a bit little girl lost herself.

"They're quite warm," she said, obviously didn't know what else to say or do.

You could see him make up his mind, and then he stepped inside like a champion, cupped her face in his hands, and kissed her, sweet as you like.

Joan gave me the wink, we let them take it slow, and then she said, "Careful with our plates, they're the only ones we've got."

And I have never seen a woman so happy and easy with it except when the first leave-trains came in at Victoria after the war was adjourned last time, because all Margaret did was dump the plates on the table and fling (the only word) her arms round his neck, and they held on to each other as though they had never gotten such far before—which, knowing the Denomination, they probably hadn't . . . and this was the only key they needed back into Eden at that moment, innocent as apples, more the man and woman they were then than they'd ever given themselves the chance to be before. We enjoyed it as much as they did, and the kids took it in their stride.

AND THAT WAS THE CONTINUATION OF THE BEGINNING . . . HE HAD two minutes with the wounded soldier at the sink, and she emerged pleased as Sheba with Elastoplast on her knee, obviously had a way with kids, we got them sat down, dished-up what there was (*For what we are about to receive*, in this case mince-and-potato pie, a great deep casserole of it, had to be deep what with

seven of us champing, spinach from the allotment and French beans from the back-garden, this lemon-pie, and the icecream, and milk for the kids and tea for us, *may the Lord make us truly thankful, Amen*), and we talked and ate and laughed and ate some more, one and a bit helpings of everything (except icecream) for everybody, and he and I scraped out the casserole, and the kids the lemon-pie dish . . . and that was that—except that I noticed he held his cup with both hands to still the slight tremor there was when he tried with one.

"Nice to see children eat well," said Margaret, "if only Anna . . ." And stopped as Barbara had, but Joan didn't notice—though we did.

"It's like feeding adults," she said.

"Still," said Margaret, and you could see the relief, "you wouldn't want it any other way," and we talked some more about this, that, and the weather, been dull, threatening thunder ever since Friday afternoon, and we finished that cup each, milk for the kids, watered the pot. . . .

"Please can we leave the table?" they said.

"Yes," we said.

"And go and play next door? only Mr. Palmer's put their tent up and they said we, could, they've asked their Mummy, and we're going to have pretend tea."

So we let them, drank the second cup, still the tremor, small circling ripples, and there was this awkward pause, nothing trivial enough left to talk about, only the big things—and the big things needed working up to . . . and he'd noticed the book on top of the radio, probably knew it, kept eyeing it.

"Out you go then," said Joan, "it'll give us two a chance to do the washing-up in peace." She sighed a stage sigh. "A woman's work . . ."

"Laurence and I will do that," said Margaret.

"Yes," he said, "we'd be very willing."

"Get on out from under our feet," said Joan, "we've got no end to talk about. How long is it since last time?" And she gave me the nod, you know, one of the signs, nothing said, a lot meant.

"Come on then," I said to him, "we'll go a walk."

And he hesitated, and you could tell why . . . dogs on the prowl, banners. . . . Margaret could, anyway, like a flash, and was on duty again, no longer sixteen.

"There are some lovely walks out Chislehurst way," said Joan.

"Take him to Hawk Wood, why don't you? then you can see how the blackberries are coming on."

"Ah! the dark wood," I said, "though it's a bit soon for blackberries."

Margaret was smiling for him to go. "You could do with a walk," she said. "I think we'll just be able to manage without you."

"There's no need to make it so unanimous," he said, and he had this thick edge with it, can't say I blamed him—but caught himself with plenty to spare. "Although I would very much like to—it's been a long time since I walked in an English wood."

"We that love England," I said, "have an ear for her music."

"Don't be nasty," said Joan, but they didn't notice.

"Come on," I said, "we'll catch a bus into Chislehurst, and walk from there."

"Be back for six," said Joan, "otherwise it'll make the evening late, and we must have the children in bed."

SO WE KISSED OUR GOOD-BYES, THEIRS MUCH MORE ENTHUSIASTIC than ours—after all, they *were* brand-naked new to their Eden, and we knew the thickets the far side of such pastures—and we got off out (though you could see he'd lost the knack of walking through open doors), down the street, round the corner, and along to Widmore Green and the bus-stop, nothing much said, this tree, that flower, how low the clouds were, moving in benediction or something.

Naturally the first bus skated by the compulsory stop, the driver delighted at being full, but we managed the next into Bromley, bags of baskets and other people's kids, but we made it.

"Two threes to the Market Square," I said.

And he tumbled it straight away. "I thought we were going into the country? Chislehurst?"

"Lonely place, the country," I said.

"Do me," said the conductor.

"And lose your lovely double-time?" I said, but he wouldn't bite. Neither would Kinman, but by when we reached the Market Square the dogs were prowling, and he was in his one o'clock state again.

"Come on," I said, "let's dive in the deep-end," and got off, and even though he knew what I was up to he followed.

"Just like Margaret," he said, "so accustomed to ordering affairs in the ward. . . ." And he had this thick edge again.

"Listen," I said, all this on the pavement, people looking, "you crash on a bike, or fall off a ladder—so the first thing you do when they let you up is to ride a bike or climb a ladder. Agreed?"

"What are you trying to prove?" he said, "that a postal order is price enough?"

Which was nasty. "Give me ten minutes, then we'll catch a bus back."

"All I want to know," he said, "is what you are trying to prove?"

"That most people you are likely to meet, likely to be seen by, neither know nor care who or what you are. That all this flinching is so much wasted nerves."

"Must be easy for you," and it broke you to see the state he was in—they may have let him out, but he was still lumbered with stones of law, a cage of shadows stronger than iron. Might as well have kept him in, all he was doing was looking out through the open door.

"Ten minutes?" I said, but he didn't answer, just came where I walked, the edge a foot thick now . . . so, for no reason worth a light (I would now say a ticky), I walked him the few yards to the un-ivy-mantled tower of the Parish Church—you know, all fake Gothic on an ancient site (*History and Guide* 6d.: Please Place the Money in the Box Provided), Kentish flint walls to look at, solid as an house builded upon the rock, but really a facing on brickwork to make everything English and genuine for likely tourists from across the waters of Jordan or wherever, about as four-square as the walls of Jericho.

"Care for an amble along the ambulatory?" I said, but all he did was shrug, obviously fighting whatever it was right down the line . . . so I walked him through the lych-gate, across the gravel path between where heaved the turf in many a mouldering heap of old builders' rubble, and in at the side door, grey half-silence, old tombs for flag-stones, bits of old brasses screwed on the wall, and round into the holy parts—ecclesiastically speaking.

But of course, there's something about these places where prayer has been valid or something, and as we went round the epistle side towards the lectern (a good piece of oak-carving—"the frowning eagle" was what my eldest child called it when she was four), you could see he was winning whatever it was . . . not that the Denomination had much time for the ceremonies of the Roman rite, but that he was the man I hoped he was

"Sorry," he said. "You must, well . . ."

"Call me your father confessor," I said. . . . "And you could in here, at that."

He smiled. "Yes, it's rather strange to see the pull Rome still exerts upon her—what does she call us?"

"Separated brethren—English, Latin, so what's the odds on the field?"

"You've obviously had little to do with them in the field then," he said. "I'd far rather have dealings with Anglicans than Roman Catholics—these are their clergy and nuns of course, many of their so-called converts remain heathen in thought and practice." And he was still speaking on his best behaviour. "No, give me Anglicans every time."

"The Community of the Resurrection?" I said, which shook him.

"How do you know?"

So I told him some of it, just from paragraph Five of the Primary Evaluation to Western Native Township, quietly, on account we were within scape of sanctuary and choir.

"I have nothing but admiration for what they are doing," he said. "A few more Christians doing as much, and Africa would be little problem."

"Did you meet Huddleston?"

"Briefly," and wanted to let it go.

"And?"

"He made me ashamed of myself—a good and great man."

"You and him," I said.

He looked away, up at the eagle, his eyes beholding afar off or something. "You have no right," he said. "What can you know of sin and selfishness in another man?"

"Which is the purpose of the exercise."

He turned, and I must have been letting the probes shew. "You mentioned ten minutes."

"All I want is that we should go to the library and look at the papers."

"Mau Mau Doctor With Friends in Bromley," he said.

"That was yesterday—there's been rape and chips since then, bread and circuses, the old cry. I'm willing to bet there won't be a mention."

"I would much rather not."

"Please yourself," I said. "Come on, we'll catch a bus," and we went across in front of the altar, it being done up in white on

account of the Feast of the Transfiguration, and back down the gospel side . . . and somehow, suddenly, he seemed to be wanting to make up for something or other, to be liked, seen for the best.

"You know," he said, "this reminds me of a church near the College, although it's considerably older than this."

"This one was bombed during the late-lamented war—what you see is modern faking."

"Good of its kind," he said. "Must have cost a lot of money."

"It did," I said. "Nothing like a temple of wood and stone when half the world starves for bread, is there?"

And (so help me) there was a poster on the wall about Our Missionary Nceding Our Support.

He allowed me out first. "Which bread?"

"Your choice," I said. "I like mine crusty."

AND WE LET IT GO, AND I WALKED HIM ROUND OUT TOWARDS THE other gates, across the gravel, past the uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture with which the rude forefathers of Bromley had decked their loved ones, dead and buried at considerable expense, out past the Notice Board, through the gates of mercy (and paid the passing tribute), and so along to the back entrance of Bromley Gardens.

And he walked with me, what sun there was shone, we turned left in, and you could see him easing up, untangling . . . and the beginning we had made continued. There were flowers, all the usual trees, grass, seats, views of this and that south to where the sea would be, all the usual birds singing fit to bust, slopes up and steps down, people, voices, strewn leaves, dogs, some nice-looking girls (fresh and clean and knowing it), kids, prams, the lot . . . and we went down to the lake they have there, and watched the ducks and drakes and swans and more people, and then we climbed around up through the rose terraces, girls playing tennis in the public courts below, white skirts and brown arms, and so to the main path and the way on out to the High Street.

"What's this building here?" he said. "Town Hall?"

"Back of the Public Library."

He smiled. "I suppose we'd better look."

"I don't think there's any need now, but it's your choice."

"What did you call it?" he said, "the deep-end?"

"There's no need now."

"I think we'd better, otherwise there'd always be that doubt."

So we went along to the High Street, crowded as ever on a Saturday afternoon, cars crawling by in both directions, drivers blasting their horns like they were all afraid of their boss or wife or whatever, copper doing his best at the crossing, and into the Reading Room among they who had once been young, nothing else to do but wait for the knell of parting day and all that lark. And the papers were in a sinful state as usual—and you can pick what bones you like out of that, form or content—but nothing about the Renegade Mau Mau Doctor, not by so much as a smear there wasn't. "Convinced?" I said, and several couples stopped talking to listen.

"*Almost thou persuadest me,*" he said, another tangle on the shake of loosening.

So I spoiled their afternoon for them by taking him out to the High Street again, and we stood on the step and watched points, the comings and goings, the greatest show on earth.

And there was just this one small thing to prove which way the liberating wind was blowing: An ordinary sort of youth came by among many with a girl, nice-looking couple, obviously on their way down to the Gaumont to see Burt Lancaster and Audrey Hepburn in *The Unforgiven* or something, and Kinman shook his head just that bit.

"What's the matter?" I said. "The Vandals at the gates?"

"That young man, look at the way he walks."

And now it had been pointed out you could see that he lifted his left foot higher every step than he need have, not much, just half a prance, the toe of his shoe dropping.

"Some weakness of the extensor muscles," he said, and then, more to himself, remembering the words, "peripheral neuritis of the anterior tibial nerve—although he's under treatment."

"National Health," I said. "Besides, she looked a nice girl."

And he smiled. "Half the battle." And the dogs were over the hills and gone.

Which was symptom enough, and gave me the gall I needed—me? I was still working up to call him Laurence.

AND WE WALKED ON UP THE HIGH STREET, SIDLING THROUGH THE crowds, consumer goods and potential patients on every hand, seemed to be taking his clinical methods out of the little black bag he hadn't opened in how long—and we made the queue at the bus-stop outside Caters Supermarket in the Market Square.

"Reminds me of market day at Yumbala," he said.

"Same people," I said, "different colour."

"I wonder?"

"Me?" I said, "I'm what is known as a long-range liberal," but we let it go on account holding our own in the queue was more important at that time.

The Market Square was a changing point for the crews, so naturally the first bus along stopped, the driver and conductor delighted to have finished their four gruelling hours or whatever the unions call it when they make a new wage demand, most of the passengers on board got off for the consumer goods, and we got a seat, no bother, and waited with everybody else for the relief crew to finish their cup in the Odd Spot Café.

"Although you may well be right," he said.

"Time enough," I said, "we've got all day—probably longer."

He picked up the hint first bounce. "Your offer of temporary accommodation—is it still open?"

"If you don't mind having three kids in the room, there's a bed you can have."

"We had hopes that Margaret would have been able to have arranged something, but it wasn't possible."

"People," I said.

"They're perfectly entitled to accommodate whom they please," he said, "and I attach no blame to their refusal to accommodate me." And there he was, the tile-fixer's son from Stoke-on-Trent, hiding behind the wall of words because truth was wounding in the open.

"You got leprosy?"

He smiled, bleakly the only word. "You could call it moral leprosy."

Which seemed to worry the woman sitting in front of us, and if I'd have been with anybody else, say Joan, I'd have given her something to worry about.

"Let's not argue the toss. So what did you do last night?"

But this time his smile was something good to see. "Margaret and I went to her mother's, and she slept there with her sister Barbara, and I later returned to her place—but this morning the person whose house it is had regretfully to assert her right to see that such a thing did not occur again." Another course of English bond.

"So tonight you sleep on Epsom Downs?"

"Tonight I sleep at the Y.M.C.A. in Croydon—but, to tell you the truth . . ." And stopped, and you could tell why—probably reminded him of where he'd slept the last two years.

"Move in with us in the morning," I said. "I'll pick you up on the bike."

"It's very kind of you," he said, "but, er, are you sure it won't be inconvenient? I mean, Joan is almost at term now, isn't she?"

"Might be glad to have you around, never know."

He laughed. "As I said earlier, I'm out of practice. . . . But it will only be for about three weeks, and I'll pay what I can and owe you the rest."

"That when you get married?"

And he blushed like he was sixteen all of a sudden.

"Barbara told me," I said. "I met her yesterday."

"Strange girl," but I let that go—and the blush was a beauty.

"Yes, we went to Croydon Registry Office this morning before we came. It's on the twenty-seventh."

"Congratulations—there's nothing quite like it."

"Thank you."

"She'll make a good 'un," I said. "Need never be short of a nurse."

"Although I wonder if I have the right?"

"Seems to me," I said, "that you'd have a rare old job trying to stop her."

And we laughed, and let it go . . . by which time the relief crew had just made it, and off we went, bang bang, clatter clatter, which rather put the damper on the woman sitting in front of us, couldn't hear half as much.

"What will you do on the twenty-eighth?" I said.

"We're not quite sure yet, it rather depends on so many imponderables."

"Like the payment of certain monies owing you?"

"Yes," he said, and by the way he said it I let that go too—time enough in his own way and time, time enough for almost everything.

IT'S A PLEASANT ENOUGH RUN OUT ALONG THAT WAY FROM BROMLEY through Bickley to Chislehurst, any number of stockbrokers and incorporated practitioners in advertising have five- and six-bed-roomed places there, twenty minutes shops and station, ten minutes the golf course and all the usual amenities, unadopted

unmade-up roads, *No Hawkers, Canvassers, Circulars* . . . which means that it's a pleasant enough area to pass through on a bus, bang bang, clatter clatter, and he'd obviously meant that about an English wood because he was lapping up the scenery and the August we were having, his heart at peace even under an English overcast sky.

So I let him stay with it while the going was good, and watched him on the quiet: this paleness was what it looked like, two years out of the sun on a deep tan, and it goes yellow on you—same thing happened to me when I came back from the Middle East after the war; a delta of crinkles round the eyes, large eyes, bit bloodshot in the whites, but the blue the kind to gaze into distances of sea, scraggly eyebrows, very black like his hair but without the grey—and talk about an Army haircut! this was a real right tuppenny all-over, though it suited him, made him look spare, intense, you could see the shape of his head . . . and there wasn't much flesh on him, when I always thought they fattened you up in prison on nice cheap starch and that; strong-seeming hands, not very well kept, at rest, folded at rest in his lap, none of your ticket-tearing and fiddling, just looking out of the window, interested, not missing much, but not gawking, under control . . . and this black suit was a sight too, pressed and tidy mind you, but frayed where it mattered, and a couple or three sizes off the peg too small.

"How did you manage with your clothes?" I said.

He looked down at his cuffs and smiled. "Margaret estimated me on her last visit but one—and this was the result. Fifty shillings in Croydon."

"Worth half—must have seen her coming."

"I've been glad of them," he said. "The, er, clothes I was wearing at, er . . ."

"The time of your sensational capture in the notorious Kinyanjui forests?" I said, and the woman in front didn't miss that.

"Precisely," he said, and smiled, and meant it, the dogs away and gone, "were hardly suitable for a formal appearance with friends at Bromley."

"Thank you for those few well-chosen words."

"Thank you."

"What about that battered old tin box I saw you with?"

"That was my medical kit, and counted as personal belongings, and was transferred over here with me."

"Bet it's seen some service," I said, but he looked away at some passing view amid trees of twentieth-century half-timbering—but the trees were real, and worth it . . . and we stayed with it round the corner, down the hill to Chislehurst station (where the woman sitting in front of us got out, gave him an old-fashioned look, and, as the bus drew away from the stop I saw her saying something to another woman, pointing, but he was too busy with the trees and August to notice, which was just as well), up, up the facing hill and up and round to the arched tower at the top, and through, and across the Common, all ferns and hawthorns and silver birches, and round to the War Memorial.

"THIS IS IT," I SAID, AND WE GOT OFF AND WALKED BACK PAST IT—*In Proud and Grateful Memory*—and across the bit of Common I had in mind leading to Hawk Wood, which meant we had to pass by yet another parish church, St. Nicholas.

"Care for another ten minutes?" I said as we neared. "Though somewhat dark, it's highly devotional and pre-Reformation—local Catholics cast longing eyes on it, and weep its passing from its original owners in the Faith to others who cannot estimate its full significance or something."

"Why," he said, right out from nowhere and all, "why are you always so flippant about spiritual matters?"

And I walked him a bit to think, could see why he trod on so many corns.

"Only," he said, "from my admittedly brief experience of you I would venture to say that your attitude is that of one standing in great but unacknowledged need." If only he'd talk the language he'd kicked the streets as a boy.

"How long did they give you? two years?"

He was so sure of himself he smiled. "I suppose you're going to say I escaped lightly?"

"The thought has just crossed my mind, nothing vicious."

"You're not alone in thinking such."

"And you take pride in it?" And it was his turn to walk for time.

"Aren't motives the most difficult things to know?" he said.

"Seems to me that to take pride in being disliked for the right reasons is asking for all you get."

"That how it strikes you?"

"Yes," I said, which seemed to worry him.

ANYWAY, WE WALKED ON PAST THE YEW HEDGE, ACROSS THE ROAD, and on down this lane I had in mind . . . and somehow he seemed to be in the state he was in along the gospel side a while back, wanting to be liked, seen for the best, bit like a kid trying to please a favourite teacher, and it had *me* worried—who was I to make the man he was get into such a state?

"Has it got any Crusaders' tombs?" he said out from the same nowhere.

"Not that I remember."

"I have a weakness for Crusaders' tombs. At one time I even went so far as to produce a paper for a local Historical Society."

"Stoke-on-Trent?"

"Hanley to be more precise—I was born 'anley." And there it was, the language of his streets, and I smiled with him.

"Not many Crusaders' tombs in the Potteries," I said. "Not from what I've seen, any road."

"Ah yes," he said, "Joan's a Tunstall girl. . . . But there are a few within easy distance, and I visited them all. I suppose with some boys it's birds'-eggs, but . . ." He caught himself as though I wasn't the one to be told, then thought better of it. "Cigarette-cards—do you remember those?"

"Biggest collection for streets around," and suddenly, there down that lane, I began to see something of what he might be getting at. "When I was a kid I used to know the names of all the players in the First Division—priceless knowledge."

He smiled, not with it, but a distance away. "I was ten in nineteen-thirty, the Great Depression. . . ." He shook his head. "What a very long time ago it all seems now."

Me? I'd only read about it in *The Road to Wigan Pier*—my Dad worked in Woolwich Arsenal, always brought home his money on Friday, us kids never lacked for jam to our bread.

"Father had been out of work six years," he said. "There were seven of us, my other two elder brothers, and my two sisters, Nancy, she was eight as I was ten. Ethel was the eldest, the only member of the family with any work at all, and, although I've heard them laughing about it since, she earned twelve shillings a week as a paintress at a pot-bank. And under the unemployment scheme Father was entitled to draw something like thirty-eight shillings. Fifty shillings a week to feed, clothe, and house seven people." He smiled that same distant smile. "Can you wonder at my passion for Crusaders' tombs?"

Which wasn't the sort needed answering either.

"Stoke's not precisely a beauty spot even now," he said, "but then . . ." He shook his head again. "It must have been soul-destroying to have been an adult in such a world—no work, no prospects of any, the slow drag day from day. . . . Nancy had had rickets when she was a baby, and who can wonder when we lived on a diet of potatoes, bread, mar . . ." He began to say mar-gar-ine the posh way, but this was of the streets and backs his childhood kicked in. "Bread and marge, tea and condensed milk?"

"So you wanted a bow of burning gold?"

"What do you mean?"

"*Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,*" I said. "You wanted to be a Crusader, join the Communist Party and *build Jerusalem in England's green and pleasant land* . . . the same conditions are producing the same results in South Africa."

And he laughed, really laughed. "That may well be true, but I can't have explained myself very clearly. What could a boy of ten have understood about an economic Jerusalem? . . . No, my interest was purely personal, a great romantic dream of other days and other ways as far removed from bread and marge as possible—we must have been reading *Ivanhoe* at school, and I associated all the glory and adventure with escape from home, three of us boys in one bed, Mother and the girls in the other, and Father and Ted—he was Mother's youngest brother—Father and Ted on a mattress in the corner."

We stopped by a gate to look across a view of fields, trees, couple or three horses belonging to a Riding School, 6/6d. an hour, no galloping, no bother.

"Ted died the year of the war starting—tuberculosis at twenty-six. Potatoes and Woodbines, there was always money for Woodbines. . . . Mother always maintained that it enabled Father and Ted to keep their self-respect, it being considered a poor wife who sent her man out lacking the price of a packet of Woodbines. The fact of choice is all-important, even though it may well be illusory."

"And you chose Crusaders?"

And he laughed again. "Misunderstood though the symbol may be."

We moved on down the lane, one of the horses, a white one, watching us over the hedge—and it had to be Rocinante or nothing—and he was easier with it now than I'd seen him yet.

"And Crusaders chose me," he said. "There was the time when . . ." He grinned to himself. "You remember I mentioned the church near our Missionary College?"

"Peniel? The Founding Fathers certainly knew how to pick symbolic names."

And, in laughter, he was more and more human every breath, hands in his coat pockets, and kicking at the odd pebble. "Although we wrestled more against principalities and powers than angels," which was truer from what I'd seen of the place than was comfortable. "However, there was a Crusader in this church, and so when I began at the College I naturally soon discovered him—I forget his name for the moment, but I even included him in my completed paper, and I used to visit him from time to time. On Sundays, after evensong, was the best time, although . . ." He grinned. "Although my regular disappearance on Sunday evenings excited some speculation as to both my morals and the state of my soul."

And I knew the Denomination too.

"But the western sun would shine in through the stained-glass and purple all his mail, and I would sit there and look at his extended sleep, and think all my favourite thoughts—I even wrote a sonnet."

"Nothing wrong with a touch of Keats."

"I had a little pocket anthology with me during my time with Kumali," he said, "it was the only book to hand except medical ones, and there was a lot of Keats in that—the dear old *Golden Treasury*."

"You sound more like the old standard District Commissioner every minute," I said, "but with them it's Thucydides or Apuleius in the Greek, keeping the blacks at bay by dressing for dinner and all that caper."

"It's easy to mock them," he said. "The great majority are decent and civilized men, doing the best they can within the limits of regulations not drawn up by themselves." And I was beginning to know another course of English bond when I saw him lay it—there was something the other side of the wall.

"Them and the Prison Governor," I said. "So what's with you and this Crusader?" But he didn't answer at once, obviously a distance elsewhere again . . . so over the stile, and along the footpath.

"At the end of my three years I left the College and went on

to Medical School—I was nineteen then, the year of the war starting, and I had neither chance nor need to return until nineteen fifty-five, when—well, when I allowed myself to be talked into joining Janek at Yumbala.”

And he needed more time yet by the sound of it, so a little flanking wasn't out of place. “How did you get on through the war?”

His laugh had this edge back in it. “Being a medical student I was exempted from military service until I'd completed my training, by which time it was over and done with.”

“You didn't miss much,” I said, “believe me.”

“But,” he said, “you see I was thus deprived of claiming exemption as a conscientious objector until it had little moral value.”

Which was the first clue, wrapped up in toffee-paper though it was—trouble for its own sake. Which, come to think of it, was just the attribute for months on the run where he'd been running. But I let it go. “So what did you do?”

“Eventually,” he said, “I worked some time for U.N.R.R.A., mainly in D.P. Camps in various parts of Germany, and then felt the need for more obstetrical training.” He paused, and there were other dogs prowling in from other hills. “No,” he said, “that's not the truth—it's too easy, we use the soft and easy words. Felt the need?” He shook his head, and the dogs couched. “I lost a girl I ought to have saved—the child lived, but I lost the mother, with no excuse except ignorance. She was twenty, Polish, been raped by both Germans and Russians in her time. Anna Magdelana Grodno . . . drunken American soldier. . . .”

We gave the agony what sunshine there was, and stayed with the footpath until the dogs had slunk back to their darkness.

“I finished my contract,” he said, “and then returned to England and managed to find a vacancy at a Maternity Hospital in Manchester for a year's post-graduate work before taking another job.”

“Long way from this Crusader,” and we laughed what passed for laughter.

“Nineteen fifty-five—even that's a very long time ago now, but I was asked to attend a meeting of the Appointments Committee at the College about my going out to Janek at Yumbala. . . .”

“Yes,” I said, and told him what I knew, from his first letter to the praying through.

And he was more of himself to smile. “Let's just say I was

talked into it . . . the chairman being old Pastor Lucas, a most persuasive man. I was also . . ." And his voice was fond, the only word. "I was also under a great debt of gratitude to him, a debt not to be repaid in money alone . . . and well . . ."

"You were boxing with both hands tied behind your back."

"What I do know," he said, "is that I was feeling none too happy that afternoon. I had intended to go out to Africa sooner or later. . . ."

"This under the influence of Janek?"

"Schweitzer more than Janek. I had grave reservations about the achievement of Janek, who was, after all, merely doing what Schweitzer had done before him—and the mere fact the non-Christian world made so much of what he was doing, and that he allowed them to make so much of it . . . Well, it made me doubtful. About his original stand against the use of nuclear weapons I yield nothing—it was a fine thing to have done. He gave up so much to go to Africa, and it detracts nothing that it seemed . . ." But he veered. "We are still as far from my Crusader—but, as I say, after being persuaded that afternoon I was none too happy. I had wanted to go out in a spirit of hope and joy, and Margaret . . ."

"Where did she spring from?"

"I knew her long before of course, although slightly, but she was a ward sister at the hospital I'd transferred to at the end of my year at Manchester, and a most pleasant surprise it was to find her there. This was in Cambridge. . . . Well, Margaret had agreed to join me but there as my wife when a call should come, but it just didn't happen that way. The Committee knew of our hopes, and so much could have come of them. But, as I say, I was persuaded that the call was to Yumbala—which meant she had to stay in England."

"Why?"

"One of Janek's stipulations was for a single man. He was himself a widower, and, as he used to say, 'set in his little ways'. But I think it was really based on a belief that the body is in some sense either irrelevant or evil, and I imagined that I'd get him to change his mind and that she could come out later and be a more than useful addition to the staff."

"More than useful?" I said. "She'll be pleased to hear that," and we laughed, August and the day less with us, other skies above, other times.

"But seriously, the greatest gospel Yumbala could have had would have been a Christian family living a full, happy Christian life." Which was really about something else, and I let it go. "But that afternoon I was low. I was back, after so many years, at a place I had fond memories of, but the whole atmosphere had so changed. . . ."

"I know," I said, "the All-American Campus, with more natty bow-ties per square foot of students than you'd think possible. Joan and I went to last year's Graduation, and even she didn't believe it—we had a Baccalaureate Address to confer degrees from what was probably a Correspondence College in Tallahassee, Florida, with one and all wearing gowns and mortar-boards like so many dog's dinners."

"Do I detect the merest hint of exaggeration?"

"It might have been Trenton, New Jersey, not Tallahassee. . . . But as the roots, so the branches—how can they expect missionaries, good ones, when there are such capers going on at the Missionary College?"

"A big question," he said, avoiding it, loyal to the last. "But five years ago these conditions, if you haven't exaggerated, were merely incipient, and my malaise was personal. . . . There were several hours till the first train, and so I found myself making for my Crusader." He smiled. "You see, we've arrived. And isn't it strange to go back? everything's changed. . . . You take the Stoke Old Road. Now I don't suppose it's changed a brick really in thirty years, but I'm sure it won't be the road I trudged as a ten-year-old on my way to Newcastle Market for stale bread on Thursdays. Mother would wetten it, and rebake it almost as good as new." He paused. "Poor Mother, she tried so hard. . . . But neither was my Crusader quite the same knight that I'd known as a lad. . . . However, the power of association was strong enough to overcome my disappointment at his rather woe-begone appearance—in fact he rather reminded me of my Father sleeping off his dinner on Sunday afternoon, except that his nose was worn down smooth to his face, and his praying hands were mere amputated stumps: not, of course, that my Father ever did much praying. . . . And I sat there next to him and began to think some of my favourite thoughts again, and even began to see some of the brighter aspects of my newly-committed position: There was the great Janek, alone at Yumbala, weary with the fight against the powers of death and darkness, a sick man sending forth the

call for a younger man to walk in his ways—and there was I, about to embark. In all sincerity I tell you I was profoundly moved, it could so very well have been true, and, almost despite myself, I saw my Crusader as Janek, a man whose work had been well done, who now wanted to rest, to sleep his sleep. A man, you could say, worn down with life, imperfect like the rest of us, but with a grandeur possessed by few. . . .”

And we walked on a bit as far as the next stile, the going easy, and over, field of oats hard by.

“So what happened?”

“I stood up,” he said, “and, in an excess of emotion, placed my hands upon his sword where his hands should have been, and thought to make some vow, some declaration of purpose: ‘*Lord, here am I! Send me,*’ and hardly daring to conceive what the implications of such a prayer might be—when I was suddenly thrust aside by a rather angry lady who had been hiding somewhere.

“‘Can’t you read that notice?’ she said, and pointed to a small card on the wall, which requested visitors to refrain from touching the monuments. And then she dressed me down in no uncertain manner, which, of course, she had every right to do. . . . Had I had any sense I’d have taken it for an omen, and gone back home there and then.”

AND IT SEEMED AS THOUGH HE THOUGHT HE’D SAID ENOUGH FOR there and then, and we walked on through that stretch of air and weather . . . and there were still trees all over the afternoon, and birds, the occasional couple looking for a chequer’d shade to be together a while or something, and we took it all in, slow and easy, the field whitening to harvest.

Then I remembered something else . . . “gone back home”. . . . *This is his home. We will never turn him away, no matter what he has done.*

“Will you be going home at all?” I said.

“I don’t know,” he said. “I may talk to Margaret about it,” and that seemed as though that was enough too. “I wonder whatever the time can be?”

“Can’t afford a watch,” I said.

So we walked on some more, saw a little green frog in a pond, splash! and all the ripples circling out . . . and trains went by in the distance to all sorts of places like Petts Wood or Herne Hill. . . .

"Although," he said, "it's often more pride of possessions than any real need to know the time."

"People are still dancing round the Golden Calf," I said. "But supposing you wanted to take my pulse or something?"

"Yes," he said. "As a matter of fact I used to have one I was rather fond of, but I'm afraid it, er, disappeared whilst I was in, er, custody."

"You mean you had it pinched?"

He smiled. "Let's say that it wasn't handed back to me yesterday. After all, I was transferred here from Africa, and it could have been lost in transit."

"Like they lost your medical kit? You got that back."

"But that's much larger."

"And less pinchable. What else did you lose?"

"There was my fountain-pen, and a few other personal odds and ends—although I did get my Miraculous Medal back. . . ." (Miraculous Medal? what was a Protestant the like of him doing with a thing the like of that?) ". . . everything else was put into a canvas bag at Mulumbi Camp, but I was assured yesterday that no such bag came with me on my transfer."

"Sticky fingers," I said, "a universal complaint, black, white, yellow, brown, and sky-blue pink."

"Unfortunately, yes."

AND WE WALKED SOME MORE, OUT OF THE FIELDS INTO THE WOOD, though I cannot rightly tell how we entered it, straggling trees being what they are, but at least into the pale shadows and that lovely damp smell of mushrooms, even though it wasn't as wild, and rough, and stubborn a wood as, perhaps, it might have been for the sake of appearances.

"However," he said, "both the Governor and the official in charge of the Stores were most apologetic, and the Governor has offered to take it up with the Prison Commissioners."

"I admire your touching faith in human nature."

"Something you could do worse than cultivate."

But that way stretched the road towards the Lamb or something, and I wasn't that far gone past the middle of the journey of our life to have to start worrying yet awhile . . . time enough.

"What were conditions like out there?" I said.

He knew the side-step as well as I did, but made no bones about it—probably thought he had time enough.

"Not very good," he said. "At least, this was two years ago, but they weren't very good then—they may have improved."

"Mulumbi Camp," I said, "there was an official inquiry and the place was closed—the guards did another dozen or so in with pick-handles. . . . But it was opened again about a month ago: Government Training Centre."

"How do you know?"

"There was an article in the *New Statesman*."

We walked for a bit through the trees, and then found a log to sit on . . . he was puffed, didn't like to admit it.

"It wasn't far from Yumbala, was it?" I said.

"No," he said, "we used to collect our supplies from there. Actually it's a fair-sized town at the end of the railway up from the south, though when Janek first went out there at the end of the war there was little more than a few sheds—that's what industry's doing for Africa, start to build a dam and all else follows."

I could have said a lot, but didn't—I had promised Joan. "What about the Camp?"

"Some miles to the west, not more than twenty from Yumbala itself. . . . A great wired-in compound with wooden towers at each corner."

"That and Hola and Auschwitz."

"You know the names."

And I could have said a lot more. "Why were you sent there? I thought it was for alleged terrorists they were rounding up?"

And I thought he was getting ratty. "Why do you persist in your refusal to believe that they were terrorists?"

"When colonial people fight for their freedom we call it nasty names, except when they happen to be fighting the Russians—then it's patriotism, like in Hungary."

"Whatever they may have been fighting for," he said, "what they did remains terrorism."

"This from you?"

"I don't see that I'm anybody to lend it authority," he said. "Truth's truth, pleasant or otherwise," and he spoke as though he'd made up his mind one way or the other about something he had in mind—and not so much in his mind as on it . . . and he got up, and I did, and we walked on for quite a way without talking, and I didn't quite know what to make of it . . . but then,

his voice gentle, out of all keeping with what he was saying, not looking at me, not looking anywhere in particular except where his next step would be, he walked again among his shadows, his carefully guarded manner of speaking almost forgotten as though most of the need for it with me had gone, as though in this and from now he could be himself and not the man he had to think about being . . . and I wondered if he'd even been that man with Margaret.

"But equally," he was saying, "what the authorities did to the captured terrorists was terrorism of the worst kind, completely without excuse, although not without reason. I saw wicked and cruel things done to chained and defenceless men. True, these men were almost certainly guilty of vile things themselves, savage and revolting things, but that was no excuse—we are supposed to be the civilized people." He faltered just that step or so . . . but he beat it, and we walked on. "I spent two months there before the trial, and saw things which will haunt the rest of my nights." And in most other men I'd met that would be the standard form of words, no thought, no bother—but with him it meant what it said . . . there would be dreams, shadows, voices—not always his own.

"Two months?" I said, more for the sake of keeping him going than anything else.

"You see," he said, "Janek and I had been taken by Kumali when he escaped from Mulumbi—Yumbala was in direct route between there and the Kinyanjui forests where they usually made for. He was naturally pursued by the security forces—I mean, Janek was an important person. . . ."

"I remember the fuss at the time—the papers went mad."

"But Kumali was able to elude capture for six or seven months, no small feat I can tell you. . . . But, of course, he couldn't last, a major sweep was eventually mounted, we were surrounded, Janek was killed. . . ." He paused, and I expected something else, but he veered. "Kumali escaped and made off deeper into the hills . . . like a wounded animal, and was eventually killed . . . weight of numbers—although he killed the sergeant, he managed to kill the sergeant." (And which sergeant? was a question to save.) He was controlling himself, and you could tell what it took. "And I was myself captured." He had enough to smile. "At first my captors insisted they'd rescued me, and I hope never to forget the look on the officer's face when I said I'd rather be

with Kumali. He was an Inspector of Police up from Kenya with a tremendous reputation for terrorist work, and when he saw I meant it he was appalled that a white man, even a doctor, could say such a thing. My troubles, such as they've been, dated from then."

"Why did you want to stay with Kumali?"

"There were reasons," and there he was, playing it safe again. "But I saw at once that I was up against the traditional 'white' mind, which . . . which is almost as prejudiced as people like you maintain, and I was regarded by this inspector and the two or three other European officers—even by the native troops—as some sort of traitor or renegade. Nothing was said, but I knew I'd be wasting my breath trying to explain. I'm not very good at explaining myself. . . . Suffice to say that when that particular drive or sweep or whatever they called it—no, I did hear it referred to afterwards as 'Operation Joshua'. Well when Operation Joshua had brought the walls of Jericho down flat. . . ." And he laughed at his own humour, probably had to. "Kumali dead. . . . Well we, that is the rest of us, five in all, lice-ridden, foul-smelling, were taken by truck through . . . through Yumbala to Mulumbi, where I spent two months before the trial."

"No charge?" I said, "no mention of Operation Habeas Corpus?"

"There was a State of Emergency in force," he said, "the courts were choked . . . they had even set up a portable gallows on the new golf-course outside the town—we could see it quite easily from the camp, the cross-beam high above the fence of corrugated-iron around it. I think it had been sent up from Kenya. . . ."

"They're good at it in Kenya."

"In the camp it was called 'The One Gift of the White Man'," he said, this bitterly. "Then, who knew of my whereabouts?" He smiled again, and the only word *was* bitterly. "And the authorities certainly had no particular reason to be solicitous about my welfare. Aside from other reasons, in their eyes, as in those of the demonstrators yesterday, I was obviously what I was subsequently found guilty of—an aider and abettor of the Queen's enemies, and, as you've said, I apparently got all I asked for." He wouldn't give me time to argue. "They used no brutality on me, no undue force, but merely ignored my being there at all. It's as if they were saying, 'You've chosen to side with the blacks, so here's your chance,' and I was merely detained there with about three

thousand natives suspected of terrorism and awaiting either trial or screening. There were also some dozen white convicts, mostly serving sentences for crimes of violence so far as I could find out, who'd been transferred there to supervise the stores and kitchen."

"As tried and tested at Auschwitz," I said. "The old game."

"Be that as it may," he said, "even these men, hardened and convicted criminals, even they were shocked at what went on in that camp—and it's as well to remember, being first or second generation settlers themselves, they had no particular gentleness towards natives, for even with the love of Christ constraining you it's extremely difficult not to be contaminated by the prevailing social climate and come to think of the typical native as something less than human." And the shadows were now hard upon him, he was getting more and more involved, the meaning difficult to follow, his voice sometimes almost lost as we swished through grass and dragging branches. "In Mulumbi that social climate could be seen for what it was. . . . I have seen a stick, four or five feet long and that thick . . ." He rounded his thumb and forefinger to the size of a broomhandle, "broken across a man's back. . . . One native warder made a habit of kicking men in the groin—have you ever heard a man with a crushed scrotum scream when he recovers consciousness?" Another question didn't need answering. "Broken bones were commonplace, both simple fractures and otherwise, compound, comminuted . . . most bones, even a fractured pelvis. . . . Abdominal ruptures, gross damage to tissue, scalp wounds, lacerations, an eye laid open . . ."

I gave him all the time he needed, and more, and we stayed with it, unseeing, the world of now a distance away, past agony grating on fresh nerves, old wounds green. . . .

"But what could I do?" he said. "They had taken my medical kit—not that it would have been much use. . . . I managed to organize a small group of helpers, and we did what we could with sticks for splints and torn rags for bandages . . . all we could do was arrest hemorrhage, treat for shock as best we could, try to prevent infection—but it was worse than useless, it would have been better to have let the injuries run their normal course."

"No," I said, "anything is better than nothing—even one white man doing something for them, however hopelessly, was better than nothing."

"Two white men. One of the convicts, a man by the name of

Davies, risked much by stealing supplies from the stores . . . but it was all useless, worse than useless."

"No," I said, "what you did had value—still has."

"Listen to me," and stopped on the fringe of a small clearing, a sight of a place where blue-bells had been, and would be—a thrush bouncing about in the undergrowth, several small birds whose names I didn't know. "There was one man, a terrorist like the rest, Ekencson of Githa, responsible, if my helpers were to be believed, for some hideous crimes against both native and European. This man was dragged in from a work-party with a broken left leg, and not so much broken as crushed at the knee, gross contamination of the joint, reactionary œdema even so soon, splinters of bone protruding—almost a classical example for immediate amputation had he not been in major shock. There had been a fall of stone in the quarry they said." You could tell what like of a fall it had been in his opinion. "They had them working an old quarry for hard-core to use on the Lukatembe dam. . . . All I could do was splint it up as best I could—splints! when it needed amputation. At best he had hours to live under those conditions, and was in a coma, which was what you'd expect . . . but, an hour or so after he'd been brought in, four native warders in the charge of a European officer came to take him to the Superintendent's office to be charged with striking a native corporal—that, probably, was the reason for his injury. . . . They, despite my protests, dragged him to his feet, the shock and pain of which must have brought him to the surface, because he made three steps with them. . . ."

And there were tears in his eyes, unashamedly.

"You or I, or most Europeans, would have relapsed at the first step—Ekencson managed three before going under again, and even they could see he was finished. He never recovered consciousness."

The shadows, the voices . . . I could feel my own bones splintering.

"As a doctor," he said, "I've seen many things, and thought myself beyond the ordinary range of emotion, people become cases—those three steps, if nothing else I saw there, taught me that tears are the gift of a loving God."

AND EVENTUALLY WE WALKED ON THROUGH THE WOOD, THE BONES in our legs unbroken, nothing worth saying, and then out from the last of the trees, along by the hedge, the blackberries coming

on nicely (all they needed was the sunshine), over the little foot-bridge across the stream, and so on to the unmade-up road by the railway embankment.

"No," he said, "not useless. I have no right to say that," and then, more to himself than me, "*even unto the least of these, my brethren.*"

There was a blackbird singing somewhere, and we gave it air, the grass greener than that behind the strands of barbed-wire along the embankment, berries there too: TRESPASSERS ON RAILWAY PROPERTY WILL BE PROSECUTED.

"Forgive me," he said. "Such a beautiful afternoon for such subjects."

"It's happening now," I said. "As we stroll here, it's happening there or somewhere."

"*And sin entered into the garden,*" he said, obviously a quotation.

"Must have been plenty of room for it," I said, but didn't give him the chance to argue. "This Kumali—he was the dispenser, wasn't he? Wasn't there something about pinching medical supplies? and you talked against the word of Janek?"

He smiled, but side-stepped all the same. "Can I just say that I liked and respected him? and that whatever it was he did it certainly wasn't stealing? But Janek would have none of it, and sent for the police."

"And Kumali took to the hills?"

"Unfortunately, yes—hardly a sign of an easy conscience with most."

"What like of a man was he?"

"I liked and respected him, he taught me the rudiments of Baluka in the few months I knew him at Yumbala, and he was a fine dispenser—can we leave it at that? there are reasons."

"Have you got any for not telling me what happened to him?"

"None," he said, and smiled. "Don't think too badly of me, there's a lot involved," and sounded like a kid who knows who broke the window but won't split. "Poor Adam . . ." and lost his smile. "When Janek sent for the police he took to the hills, as you say—but with no experience of life in the forests he was quickly found and arrested. He'd been born and bred in a native township in Gathongo, a real *totsi* with several arrests to his discredit, and he knew more about the ways of the streets than those of the bush, and he had no chance against the trackers employed

by the police. Although, considering his background, it's no wonder he tried."

"How come he was with Janek in the first place? Hardly sounds the type."

"He'd been converted by one of our workers in Gathongo, that's a big mining area in the south, when he was a boy—a genuine conversion, one which urged him to give himself to Christ through service." He must have seen the look on my face. "No," he said, "it happens, and more often than you think . . . and Kumali was helped, educated, and trained at Yumbala, and was, as I've said, a fine dispenser and a very likeable young man."

"And Janek drove him back into his past?"

"You're in no position to judge—Janek did what he believed was right."

I didn't push my luck. "And?"

"He was sentenced to five years . . . five years, in the conditions . . . Gathongo . . ." But there were shadows, and he walked with them and the voices along that unmade-up road, and a woman with a white poodle minced by, fifty, sixty, seventy—how old are women at that age? expensive perfume, and we watched her by. "After about a year he escaped and came back to Yumbala, but was . . ." He had no words.

"Turned in?" I said.

He said nothing for twenty slow yards or thereabouts. "Recaptured and lodged in Mulumbi pending an escort back to Gathongo . . . and whilst he was there he somehow got mixed up with what you would call the 'political prisoners'—terrorists, fighters for freedom, call them what you like. He became convinced that to fight was the only way, and quickly became accepted as a leader. In fact he was a natural leader . . . It was then, less than a month later than his being lodged there, that . . ." And again, lost words.

"The Mulumbi Massacre?"

He nodded.

"The papers gave it the treatment," I said, "like they did Hola recently, and Sharpeville."

And he flared, as angry as such men can be, deep, controlled. "The Press has much to answer for—this deliberate exploitation of violence leads to more violence, they are as much to blame as . . ." But he gave himself time, and managed a smile. "You probably know as much about the story as I do, because my access

to most of your sources of information has been somewhat limited." And there he was, wrapping it up in words again, which meant that he was probably having a quiet dig at my having read the dossier on him. "But what I *do* know is what I saw, and what Kumali told me, which may or may not, as you choose, be true . . . We'd seen him taken in the military truck from Yumbala, handcuffed, and then heard nothing of either him or Mulumbi for three or four weeks. And then, one evening, Janek got an emergency call to Mulumbi, to, as the telephonist said, 'treat a few men injured in a brawl', but he was tired after a long day, understandable at his age, and so I went."

We turned the corner at the end of the road, left under the railway bridges by Chislehurst Station, the bus-stop a step and pride away, cars and bikes belting up and down in both directions.

"Shall we walk back?" I said, "it isn't far once we've got to the top of the hill."

"You know, it's rather like the road out of Hanley up into Hartshill and Newcastle, about as steep."

"People round here wouldn't thank you for saying that," I said, and we laughed, and walked on up, and he didn't say anything for quite a bit, obviously trying not to let on how puffed he was.

"It's no good," he said about half-way, "I'm hopelessly out of condition."

"All this luxurious living," I said. "It's a good job your Mum isn't waiting on you to bring back the bread from Newcastle Market," and he laughed with what breath he had.

"No," he said, "I'd be in for a swipe or two."

And we hung on there, just letting be, until he made the first move up, but slower . . . and he'd had time enough for everything.

"What I saw when I got there," he said, his voice strangely gentle again, so that I had to strain to hear him in the belting of cars and bikes up and down, "what I saw was indescribable. It was quite dark . . . A corner of what I later knew as the Penal Compound—it was merely one corner of the Main Camp fenced-off—this had seven or eight military trucks ranged across it, their headlamps blazing, all pointing at this corner as if there was a wild animal penned there . . . I drove along by the outside wire towards the lights. Nobody met me—I doubt if I was either expected or welcome: someone had probably phoned in panic . . .

As I got closer I could make out native soldiers, casting enormous shadows everywhere, blackness on blackness. I got as close as I could, switched off the engine—and immediately heard the shouts of angry men, cursing and swearing in Swahili and Baluka, an English voice using vile language—and cries of pain, moaning, screams . . . one scream was unlike anything I'd ever heard before—except . . .”

And the shadows and the hill were too much, and we walked on up, his face set with more than remembered agony.

“Except,” he said when he had it beaten, the top yards behind, “except when I lost poor little Anna—she screamed like that . . . We'd run out of anæsthetic . . . But even as I reached the lights it choked off in the unmistakable way of a man whose throat has flooded with a hæmorrhage—bubbling . . . Eventually I got into the Compound, contacted the vile-mouthed English officer in charge . . .” He laughed an ugly laugh. “In charge? he would have done for something out of Dante . . . contacted him, a captain, and insisted on being allowed to do what I could . . . nobody seemed to care . . . There were small heaps of men lying here and there all over the ground, not on anything, stretchers or blankets or even tarpaulins, just on the ground—and they must have been there several hours. It had taken me an hour or more to drive there, and God alone knows how long they'd been there before that . . . Violence I can understand, but to watch with headlamps blazing on human agony needs more than understanding—forgiveness . . .”

We walked on past some of the five- and six-bedroomed places out along that way from Chislehurst back through Bickley.

“Man,” I said, “the murderer among us—that captain has probably settled down in a place very like this, salesman, likes his half-pint at The Bird-In-Hand, pillar of society.”

“That's far too easy,” he said, “too superficial—the truth is darker.”

“Dark enough either way, but from what I've read most camp guards and warders *are* pillars of society, love the wife and kids, have nice homes, kind to animals—the lot.”

“I used to believe that,” he said, “but when I was in Germany I talked with a lot of not very articulate men and women who had suffered at the hands of some of these men, and they *are* a type—not necessarily sadistic monsters, but a type nevertheless.”

“Why do you say ‘not very articulate’?”

He smiled, and obviously meant more than the words he used, having another quiet dig at me. "Because articulate people are rarely satisfied with simple explanations, but must always be seeking complexity, hidden motives . . . From what I was told by people who had been in Auschwitz . . ." He meant the reproof in his voice, and I took it. "And from what I was able to see for myself, these men are extremely conscientious, anxious to obey orders—but they remain a type, unable to fit in with the ordinary requirements of normal life. Why else do such as this captain stay at their posts? why do people take up such appointments? they must know what they entail . . . Prison warders are a case in point—they . . ." And he seemed to regret having gone so far, and I gave him the chance to step back.

"I'll stick to sadistic monsters."

And he seemed grateful for the chance. "Never make the mistake of ranging all the good on one side, all the bad on the other—the tragedy lies in evil resulting from the best of motives." Which again, was about something else. "No, these men believe they are doing their duty, and such a man must still be exercising authority somewhere, there being very little else he could do as efficiently . . ." And he let it go. "But that night I dealt with probably twenty serious cases whilst I was there, quite apart from noting nine or ten dead at a cursory examination—there were seventeen by morning . . . And the condition of most of them was pitiable, even cursorily—this was my first experience of Mulumbi, and I afterwards lost most of my reserves of pity . . . From what I gathered there'd been an attempt at a mass-escape, the guards had opened fire in panic, and then afterwards both they and the African Rifles, who'd been called out at the alarm, set upon the wounded in what could only have been a blind fury . . . gun-shot wounds, some extensive and quite obviously short-range, overlaid with the results of a ferocious attack with clubs, sticks, rifle-butts . . ."

And, quite as obviously, he'd acquired fresh reserves to draw on since then.

"I did what I could," he said, "selected what appeared to be the most critical cases for whom something could still be done, and set some of the more likely soldiers about tending the less seriously wounded. I believe I was helped in this because by now those in charge could see how serious the situation could get for them."

"It did," I said, "on paper. Questions were asked in the House, big deal—there were protest meetings, letters in the *Guardian*, *Spectator*, *New Statesman* . . . and nothing happened, not a blind thing. They probably got promoted."

"As I say—such men must still be exercising authority."

"Though they just might cop a packet if ever the survivors get to form a government and can lay hands on them."

"God forbid!" and sounded shocked.

"Would at least make a change—the Mulumbi War Trials."

"What good would that do? Violence, legal or otherwise, only leads to more violence—look what's happening out there now."

"I may be a long-range liberal," I said, "but my liberality is only skin-deep."

He shook his head. "Then you're as potential a murderer as those men ever were, and as much in danger of the judgement."

I knew the text. "*But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause*—that's the word, *cause*. Don't you think there's cause enough to be sparing against such men?"

"There's no easy answer," he said. "Love is more than the manipulation of texts."

"I'd love them," and we let it go—time enough, though I had doubts what the Jesus I had in mind would have made of it. "Anyway," I said some of the time later and half-way to Bickley, "what happened that night?"

The shadows, the voices . . . force, death and painful wounds . . . our way downwards, not on the ruin of harrowed stones, but on swept pavements.

"I was operating by the light from the headlamps—I had some of the trucks moved to throw their beams on to the tailboard of the hospital truck, and I'd rigged a tarpaulin shelter over to make a kind of tent . . . and then I came across Kumali, who hadn't been among the wounded when I'd selected the most critical. But he was placed up on the tailboard by the soldiers I had doing this, and, at first sight, he looked worse than most—blood in great clots, moaning as though in delirium, and clutching at what appeared to be a major protrusion of the lower bowel . . . But as I began to swab the site to examine, without opening his eyes he whispered something through the moans, not loudly enough for anybody else to hear except myself, and even I had to bend lower near his mouth.

"‘Yes, Adam?’ I asked him.

"‘Leave this place quickly,’ he whispered. ‘Soon it will not be good for you to be here.’

"‘What do you mean?’ I asked him.

"‘Leave quickly,’ he whispered again, ‘we want no harm on you.’ And he began moaning again, clutching in apparent agony at his wound. ‘There is nothing sick with me,’ he whispered, ‘have me put back where I was, there is nothing sick—but leave quickly.’ And he moved his hands slightly, and I saw at once that he was clutching a length of bowel not his own—human most certainly, but not his own. There was no wound at the site.

"‘Quickly,’ he whispered.

"And then, for no reason I knew of then, I told the soldiers to move him back where they’d found him. ‘There is nothing we can do for him,’ I said. ‘Bring the next.’ And I saw Kumali open his eyes imploringly, but he daren’t say anything else, and they carried him away and brought the next . . . a shattered lower jaw."

There was a lot I wanted to know, but I gave it air and what sunshine there was . . . and the clock of St. George’s church stood at twenty to six.

"And so it went on all that night," he said, "operation after operation. There was no shortage of equipment and supplies as I had the hospital emergency truck, a corporal proved a capable assistant as he’d done some work in a native hospital down in Johannesburg—and we were only doing emergency operations, patching-up for more thorough work later . . . Work probably never done."

"Why didn’t you send for Janek?" I said.

It didn’t seem as though he’d heard me, though I knew he had . . . twenty, thirty yards—the grief turned inward to increase the agony.

"I did," he said, "twice."

"And?"

"Janek afterwards said he received no such message."

"What do you think?"

"I have no way of knowing . . . the messages might never have been sent, the night duty nurse might not have wanted to disturb him . . ."

"But what do you *think*?" I said.

"What I think is not all that important," he said, and there was

this awkward hundred yards or so—cars passing in both directions, club cricket playing in the ground across the road, and us less than ten minutes from home, tea, and whatever.

"Not far now," I said, "just along here."

And we turned down Page Heath Lane, lot of big houses now made over into private schools, flats, one a maternity unit, pleasant enough road . . .

"I'm sorry," he said.

"No need," I said. "It's me crowding you—and, to tell you the truth, I'm tired myself. Haven't walked so far for weeks."

He laughed. "All this luxurious living." Which was shrewd.

"What happened eventually?"

"By a little after dawn we'd done all we could, and I was in such an emotional state, and so tired, that my hands were trembling and it would have been futile to have gone on. So I thanked my corporal, and then made the mistake of intimating to the superintendent that I was going to raise Cain about the whole thing with the very highest possible authorities—write to England, everything." He smiled. "Which is probably another reason for my not being exactly popular in Mulumbi when I subsequently entered it as a prisoner."

Which was the first time he'd used the word to describe himself, must have signified something or other.

"Eventually I drove away, tired and empty—but I wasn't a mile or more along the road when the roof of the cab was banged on from inside the truck . . . I stopped, and of course it was Kumali, looking as cheerful as I'd ever seen him. And, from what he told me, my presence in Mulumbi had prevented not only a mass breakout but a retaliatory massacre of European and native warders. When the initial attempt by the more reckless detainees had failed, the panic and confusion had been such that the group led by Kumali were on the brink of launching what I suppose could be called a counter-attack, with, I'd say, considerable chance of success . . . but then Kumali had spotted the Yumbala truck and me. And, such was his power over those desperate men, he was able to restrain them whilst he did his best to warn me to leave . . . and when that failed he was able to talk them into a second plan, the one he was then trying . . . to make good his own escape in the truck I was driving, rely on my help, and to cut the barbed-wire surrounding the camp at a selected point that night and so lead them to freedom, rather

than to fight their way out, probably with even heavier loss of life than before."

"Adam Kumali?" I said, "or Moses? *Let my people go.*"

And what he said wasn't really for me, I just happened to be there.

"He slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand."

So I pretended not to have heard, probably used to talking to himself where he'd been. "A second attempt was a risky business, bound to have been reinforcements from all over the place—even Kenya." I meant to be nasty.

"No," he said, "which is where Kumali shewed his judgement, for, quite rightly in the event, he concluded the authorities wouldn't want to draw attention to what had happened by calling for reinforcements, and that, once the detainees had counted their losses, they would be in no mood to try again so soon . . . and that *was* the mood among them that morning apparently, but he persuaded them to this plan . . . and it worked. Although I was compounding a felony and worse, I gave him all the emergency rations from the truck, the two water bottles, and the pliers from the tool-kit—what he was proposing to do without pliers I don't know, he'd have never cut the wire."

"Did they know this when they gave you two years?"

"Of course," he said, "I told them."

"Wonder they didn't shoot you."

He smiled. "I hardly know now why I did help him, but what I'd seen that night must have influenced me."

I had to laugh. "Influenced you? I'd have gone to help with the wire!"

"I was too tired—I merely watched him into the bush, and then drove back to Yumbala."

"Not by the native ford I hope? 'There are flood which come quickly when the rain in hill and river Lukatembe deeper than a man'—or something."

And he laughed, really laughed. "That sounds very familiar—this more from the dossier? Precisely what Janek used to say, he always used to be saying it—though in better English. He spoke better English than he wrote."

So I told him about that bit of the transcript.

"No," he said, "by the bridge—Janek was right about that ford, a deadly, ramshackle contraption it was."

"Yet you used it that other time?"

"I was wrong. In mitigation I can only say that I was green."

"Wasn't there something about cardboard supply boxes, and rain?"

"Now that was a point in my favour—a shameful economy it proved to be, as not only were they affected by the damp, but white ants seemed to thrive on the stuff, and we had to write off most of the consignment within the quarter . . . But in principle Janek was right." And smiled again, with grimly again the word. "As the police and troops pursuing Kumali discovered that night . . . his plan worked to the letter, they even stole three trucks, and no alarm was raised till hours later. They came straight to Yumbala, using the ford, and left one man to sabotage the raft—which wasn't the most difficult thing in the world to do. He had the courage to wait for the first military truck to reach mid-river before he cut the guide-ropes to the bank, and naturally the raft foundered and the rest of the force had to make their way round to the bridge. Which gave Kumali all the time he wanted, as he had already sent a party to fire that . . . a great pity in one way, as that bridge meant a lot to Janek—not that he ever knew about it. He was at least spared that."

"This when they took you as hostages?"

"Yes," he said, and we let it go . . . houses, Private School, a sight of the gasworks behind the roofs at the end of the road. "Kumali came in just as we were about to start our supper . . . and . . . it was all very confusing and uncertain . . . well, eventually, we went with him."

You could tell he was holding out, sure as little apples.

"What did Janek have to say for himself?"

He hesitated. "You must remember he was an old man, not in the best of health . . . and . . ."

"Was Kumali going to kill him?" I said.

And there he was, straddled between his need to go on holding out on whatever it was and his refusal to bear false witness.

"Can I just say that, in the event, he didn't kill him?"

"So you became hostages instead?"

It worried him to admit as much. "Yes, if you want to put it that way—we collected together a quite useful medical and surgical kit, made what good-byes and arrangements we had time for, left instructions for the treatments in hand—and then off we were driven, Janek with Kumali in the first truck, and me in the

second, the third coming along behind . . . Into the notorious Kinyanjui forests . . . seven months . . . What a very long time ago it all appears now," he said.

"Two years," I said, and took a chance on him. "Was it worth it?"

We turned the corner, and there was our road, the bike outside the front-gate, and tea probably ready and waiting on the table . . . and we walked towards it, hungry.

"Yes," he said, "it was."

AND TEA WAS (FOR WHAT WE ARE ABOUT TO RECEIVE, IN THIS CASE what the kids called a "smart" one—egg sandwiches, bread and home-made blackcurrant jam, raspberries from the allotment and a tin of evaporated milk, a trifle, an almond cake, orange juice for the kids, and tea for us, two cups each, hot and sweet, *may the Lord make us truly thankful, Amen*), and so we didn't get much chance to say a lot round the point except the general run of this, that, and life . . . pass the jam please, and the fun the kids had in the Palmers' tent, and the state of the blackberries, and the frog we had seen, splash! *O have you seen my golden ball?* Which meant I had to tell that story to the kids over the last of the cake . . . *and they lived happily ever afterwards*, and he and Margaret were obviously with it, right down the line and back, easier with us, easier with one another (though he hadn't lost the tremor holding his cup), and Joan gave me the wink as she poured the last of the tea for herself and Margaret—I'd had enough, any more and it would have run out of my ears.

"What happened to the wicked old witch?" said one of the kids, "was she deaded?"

"She got put to bed at seven o'clock," said Joan.

And so, down that line and back, we got them to bed if not to sleep, the washing-up done, and ourselves sat in the front-room for an hour or so before he and Margaret need think of going . . . and all we did was talk some more, a lot said, nothing much meant—do you remember such a time? such a place? such a person? this remark? that occasion? some other thing? Until Joan and Margaret slid off somewhere into a pastel-shade-of-pink conversation involving crease-resisting printed cotton at 6/11d. a yard, and he smiled at me and we had one of those rough-male-kiss-of-blanket moments: Women!

"Have you still got that dossier?" he said.

"In the other room—I'll get it out."

"While you're out," said Joan, never missed a trick, "bring in that box of sewing-machine attachments from the drawer of the cupboard please, only Margaret has taken a dress-making course at Singers and knows what they're all for."

"I most likely won't be able to remember now," said Margaret.

"Would you like the machine in as well?" I said, really taking the micky.

"Well . . ." paying me back for more than need be gone into, "it would be rather a good idea," and smiled sweet as you like.

So I smiled back, he and I lugged it in from the other room, I found the box she was wanting, and we left them to it, clatter clatter, treadle treadle, and adjourned out of the way, and I got down the *Thrilling Volume* from on top of the radio.

"One small thing," he said, "before I forget—during tea I remembered another thing about my Crusader, though why it seems important I can't imagine, but he died at the end of the siege of Acre . . . eleven-ninety. I can see the lettering on the inscription as clear as day, but just can't seem to read the name."

I had to laugh. "Didn't you say he reminded you of your father sleeping off his dinner on a Sunday afternoon?"

"Yes," but puzzled wasn't the word.

"Then what you've got, sure as little apples, is a pathological memory blockage due to suppressed Oedipus complex or something—a popular phenomenon. Page one, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*."

He was horrified. "You surely don't credit such nonsense? Completely unsubstantiated theorizing, quite apart from being obscene."

Which was a nerve touched, if nothing else—practically a stock neurotic response, except he was no neurotic straight from stock: flanking was quite in order. "Relax," I said, "me and Uncle Freud fell out of the same bed years ago—too much Genesis and Revelation, not enough sleep without dreaming."

And he laughed, though not with it one little bit, unhappy more than anything—and I gave him the envelope of scruffy flimsy to take his mind off whatever it was, that's if he even knew . . . and we sat and settled down, me with Janek in his 57 varieties of characteristic pose, and Kinman (no, it would have to get to be Laurence) with the loving researches of his Dear Brother

in Christ . . . and, as I had on the bus, I watched him on the quiet: his face was a picture—dead keen whilst pretending to be merely curious: then a bit disappointed as though to say, Is this all?: then with the engrossed look of someone reading something they've forgotten writing: then smiling at some memory, then annoyed, not much, but niggled: then frowning slightly, page after page, carefully . . . and every so often I'd turn a page to keep my end up:

Dr. Janek seen smiling happily as yet another once feared Tribal juju idol is surrendered to the flames in the Compound of Yumbala Missionary Hospital, the Scene of many such Witnessings proving that the Eternal Gospel Preached by the Famous Doctor still has Its Ancient Power.

"Did, er, Pastor Stone make any, er, reservation as to whom you could shew it?" he said about two-thirds through.

"Just me and mine."

"I wonder why to you? After all, and without wishing to be unpleasant, you're not even a Church member, are you?"

And I smiled sweet as Joan had. "Neither are you."

Which shook him at first, until he saw the funny side of it, and then we laughed, really laughed, and it did him good. "My! but wouldn't he be dished if ever the Brethren got to hear of his divulging this to two non-members!"

"Risking a lot for the sake of pride," I said, which was really about something else, but he couldn't have heard—that or didn't want to.

"I haven't quite finished yet," he said, and was off again, back with the end of the *Evaluation* and the beginning of Janek's first letter.

"The Day of the Conversion of Paul," he read, "You could know from that, if nothing else, he'd been a Catholic . . ."

Which wasn't really meant as a talking point, and I let it go, and turned a page of my own . . . and there was Janek with another lot of Savage Warriors of the Baluka Tribe in Full War Paint, only this time they were that much more Persuaded than last time on account they were about to Cast Off their Primitive Costume and don more Seemly Garb or something . . . and I turned till I found one of the few photographs in which the Famous Doctor didn't feature: a view from the rise above Yumbala of the wide slow sweep of the Lukatembe—all changed now of course, most of the valley a rising lake on account they'd built a

dam, the old ways lost and drowned—but, in the photograph, the great trees still overhung the water, a distance of low hills swelling away into the mists of the evening mountains like the waves of an inland sea, and I looked at it and thought thoughts composed of Rider Haggard and all the White Hunter films I'd ever seen . . . you know, sunless green shadows, the damp of rotting vegetation, strange trees and palms, dragging vines looping back into darkness, scarlet orchids swaying slightly at some hot breath of northern wind (from what desert? what brazen rocks?)—then the sudden screech of a parakeet exploding the ominous jungle into sound, shrieks and whistles and yells and the coughing roar of lions, apes gibbering, the swift sight of a couching leopard, a thin green snake slithering down and round and through a tangle of branches—and then a black face seen in the shadows, eyes watching, face daubed, spear poised, quivering: the drums beginning . . . another face, plumed with black ostrich feathers, spear poised, quivering: the drums louder, thudding . . . another face, then another, and another—masks, eyes, spears, small round shields, arrows barbed with thorns . . . the drums sounding behind the darkness, the wooden horror of a rearing god, feet stamping the dance to the drums, the pounding drums of Africa, girls with little black breasts dancing, sweat beading on black flesh . . . and I looked up at him (soon to be Laurence), and it was really the sound of the treadle in the front-room . . . and I watched him reading and thought other thoughts . . . a train rumbled by outside, Hastings or Herne Hill . . . and eventually he had it over and done with, and looked up at me watching him.

"Well," I said, "what do you make of it?"

He smiled. "Most embarrassing—what I still can't understand is why Pastor Stone let you have it."

"To put me off you, justify himself—any number of nasty reasons."

"Why have you got it in for him?"

"He's just not a man I take to, don't like the colour of his eyes, and he does too good a hatchet job for my liking." And shrugged.

"He's done a pretty good one on you."

"No," he said, "he's merely done what he considers his duty."

"Do you agree with him?" I said. "Were they right to kick you out?"

"What else could they have done?"

"What about the money they owe you?" I said.

"I'd prefer to leave that for the moment."

And we came to a stop, labouring, the treadle still going, probably running-up a few blue bows on the napkins by now . . . and he sat there with the sheets of flimsy, and I sat across from him but really knee-deep in the Lukatembe. And the sight of that flimsy reminded me that I hadn't read it all yet.

"Let's swap," I said, "I've got a page or two to go in that," and got up and handed him the book before he had much chance to argue the toss—and he gave me the flimsy with what could only have been not very well disguised reluctance: which, of course, was understandable enough.

I sat down again, and there I was, back in that typewritten world again, the end of Janek's first letter half-way down page 21, and the beginning of the second hard upon it—and even though I knew it was my turn to be watched I read the rest through:

The Day of Saint Stanislaus,

To Dear Brother President,

I ask you not to concern you with my little ways, but Saint Stanislaus was confirmed in me name by my Dear Mother many year in Poland and is precious to me in memory of old time.

The matter of sending Brother Kinman as helper, who has been in Yumbala half year is time for Report, this matter is not to concern you.

I can have nothing to tell you concern of Brother Kinman as the doctor as I tell you in my letter to you, and he is willing to fall with my little ways. I am quick to forgive forget all thing the virtue of the younger man, and Brother Kinman understand which are not unreasonable, the matter the wood bridge, the matter of Adam Kumali, all.

This Adam Kumali make to hill when I send to police, the police find, punish five year to Gathongo which is prison, and Brother Kinman sorry, but not talk against my word but understand more the primitive mind.

I tell you Brother President for this reason Brother Kinman to stay in Yumbala for the labour I had the quest for in my letter to you, good for the labour I want and he harvest more experience day and day tropical medicine of which Yumbala is rich in all branches.

The Father which art in Heaven to bless all, Dear Brother President.

Stefan Vladimir Janek.

And that was the last bit that counted, for page 23 followed, with its list of committee members whose testimony had been so lovingly garnered by the man who had removed his own . . . and phrase lumbered after phrase, tired, flabby, indicative of something—probably the treasure of their hearts or whatever—and I left them sagging . . . and Kinman (Laurence?) had obviously been watching me all the time, a lot at stake.

"Certainly changed his tune," I said.

He smiled. Janek had his funny little ways, but once you'd got used to him he was easy enough to get on with."

"Give in and you'd have no bother?"

"No, not at all like that—in principle he was generally right. When I first arrived I was green and knew it all, but, once I'd settled down, we got on reasonably well together."

"You were wrong then, about not being able to work with him?"

"Yes, I think I was—once I'd discovered how not to rub him up the wrong way we did some good work, though . . . there was always some small friction . . . You must remember that living and working in such a climate, hot and humid, imposes radically different strains and stresses. Without being pompous, you could say that tiny surface cracks in character become flaws to the heart—quite trivial incidents become major events. Which is rather strange really—you leave for Africa intending the supreme sacrifice of life itself if need be, only to find it difficult enough to put up with things like finger-tapping or tuneless whistling by your fellow workers . . . And doctors have special problems . . ." He paused, and veered away. "Janek was, of course, a remarkable man, and remarkable men have the habit of being—well . . ." He left it with me.

"Were you wrong about Kumali as well?"

"There was truth on both sides."

And we came to another stop, making really heavy going of it, the treadle quiet for a bit.

"What do you make of the book?" I said when it became embarrassing.

He took the chance to look away, turn a few pages. "It's certainly rather strange to see places you've known . . . Of course most of these were taken before my time, but there are one or two I remember being taken by Kumali, he being the only competent photographer."

"Now there's irony for you!"

"This one for example," he said, and I got up over and looked. "*Savage Warriors of the Baluka Tribe in Full War Paint*," he read, and smiled. "They were only persuaded with great difficulty by Kumali to dress up like this, no white man could have managed it, as they view the camera with grave suspicion—which probably accounts for their ferocious expressions. In reality they were a hunting people whose last war dated from the eighteenthies."

"Except the one they're fighting now," I said, but he obviously chose to let it go, and sat there looking through the book, and I stood there like a spare at a wedding . . .

BUT THEN THE DOOR OPENED, AND JOAN AND MARGARET CAME IN.

"How have you two been getting on?" said Joan.

"Well enough," I said.

"Till now?" she said, this sweet smile.

"You know me good," I said. "How have you two been getting on?"

But he and Margaret didn't know us well enough to know the old game, and you could tell they were getting worried, so we let it slide, and made cocoa, and talked some more—do you remember that other time? that other place? that other person? other remark? other occasion? some yet other thing?

And as I watched him holding his mug with both hands to still the small circling ripples (from what flaw at what depths of the heart?), I remembered he was a surgeon, the edge of whose knife had once to stand duty for the moving finger of God, searching death among the nerves and flesh of life, surely and steadily . . . and I thought some more of the usual thoughts until Joan yawned once or twice, and Margaret took the hint.

"Come on, Laurence," she said, "we've got trains and buses to catch."

"I'll run you over on the bike," I said. "You didn't get returns, did you?"

"No," she said, "but well, are you sure?"

"Take half the time—that's if you don't mind clambering about in that dress."

"Isn't it a nice one?" said Joan, "she made it herself . . ." And sighed, more real than it looked. "I'll be glad to see the end of smocks."

"It's not all that good really," said Margaret.

And I started to dig out the spare raincoat and crash-helmet for him from the cupboard under the stairs.

"It's very kind of you," he said, "are you sure, it, er . . ."

"Just let's hope we haven't got someone hiding in the back," I said, and we two smiled.

"Have you arranged about tomorrow?" said Joan.

"What about tomorrow?"

And she and Margaret smiled at each other. "Men!" she said. "Well *we* have—I've decided that I'd like to go and see this unveiling ceremony or whatever it's going to be, I haven't been out on a jaunt for ages, and I might not get another chance for months."

"Are you thinking of going?" I said to Margaret.

"I'm on duty tomorrow till six, but Laurence and I are hoping to go to Mother's for tea—aren't we?"

"Yes," he said, and they shared a secret or something, smiling. "Someone there we must see." Two solitudes beginning to protect and touch, to greet each other, even though it wasn't the 26th yet.

And all this time Joan had been trying to tip me the wink about something or other, and then she pointed to him and mouthed something I couldn't make out, and I shrugged.

She gave up. "What about the other arrangements?" she said, and I saw Margaret start getting that bit embarrassed.

"What about?" I said, and then twiggled it, bang bang. "You mean about . . ." and almost said Dr. Kinman, but checked, and found it in me to use his name. "You mean about Laurence moving over here with us?"

"What else would I mean?" she said, relieved as Mafeking and smiling at Margaret to shew that it was all right, so why was she worrying.

"We're not that hopeless," I said. "I'm picking him up from the Y.M.C.A. in Croydon at . . . When in the morning?" I said to him.

"Whenever you can best manage it," he said, "although I would like to be able to go to early church somewhere."

"What say about half-eleven?" I said, "then I can drop our lot at Church on my way, and you'll have all the time you want."

"You're shaping yourself now," said Joan. "That's arranged then."

"It's ever so good of you," said Margaret, but we didn't give her a chance to develop the theme.

"I can bring some of your stuff back with me tonight," I said to him.

And he, Laurence now I'd got over that first time of using, Laurence smiled, and it was good to see—slow and easy, more the man I'd had in mind he would be.

"That won't be necessary," he said, "I'm quite used to travelling light."

No self-pity, just the statement, and somehow it was both funny and sad, and it caught Joan not ten yards from the water-works . . . and so I dashed about a bit to change the subject, got him into the raincoat and crash-helmet, found another old coat for Margaret, got them outside (and he still hesitated just that little bit before going through the open door), her into the sidecar, lid down, and him on the pillion . . . the moon high, more ~~cloud~~ about than yesterday, the stars remote.

"Good night," everybody said, "good night."

And the bike started third time of kicking, I switched on the lights, we all waved to Joan at the front-gate, and away we chugged in first down our road, hardly worth changing-up ~~up~~ till round the corner . . . and then, bang bang, no bother except the occasional glare of headlights, and away we went through Beckenham and Croydon to Carshalton.

WHAT CAN YOU SAY AT THIRTY ON A BIKE AT NIGHT?

So we didn't bother, though we did stop at the lights the other side of Wallington so that Margaret could tell me the way, first right, second left, and it's the house opposite the last lamp-post.

But I stopped at the end of the road, and lifted the lid, and you could tell she couldn't make out why.

"You two can walk from here," I said, "it's a lovely night."

She knew what I meant even if he didn't . . . another night, other stars, a moon high and silver above some sleeping landscape of the mind . . . and she smiled, I dismounted and helped her out, and he got off and came round.

"Thank you," she said, "thank you for everything," and (so help me) she kissed me a sisterly kiss, and her breath had this smell of bread and butter.

"Go on," I said to him, "I've got to get some petrol from somewhere—see you back here in ten minutes. I'll honk on the horn," and did to let him hear it . . . and even though he still wasn't all that with it, he got the drift of which way the wind blew in that landscape, and they walked away down that narrow middle-class road, *No Hawkers, Canvassers, Moral Lepers*, turned at the first lamp-post, she waved, and I waved back . . . and then I mounted the closest thing I'd ever get to a white horse going by the name of Rocinante, and chugged away for a nice quiet twenty-minute cup of tea the first place I could find open.

Which was as stewed as my Uncle Mike used to be over Christmas when I was a kid, but, like my Uncle Mike, worth it when you came to think about it.

ANYWAY, I GAVE HIM HIS TIME IN THOSE PASTURES, CHUGGED BACK to the first lamp-post, and honked . . . and in time enough he came into the round of light, walking awkwardly in the heavy raincoat (which reminded me), and so to the bike . . . and I knew how he felt, and just nodded as he got on the pillion.

And so back to Croydon and the Y.M.C.A.

I kept the engine running, and he got off.

"I don't know how to thank you," he said.

"That's all right—half-eleven in the morning?"

"Yes," he said . . . and talk about Joan being ten yards from the water-works!

"This is daft, I know," I said, "but seeing you walking awkwardly just now reminded me—I've been meaning to ask—but you remember that youth we saw this afternoon outside the Library? the one with the limp." He nodded, but at least it had his mind elsewhere. "How do you know it just wasn't new shoes—you know, rubbing up a blister?"

"It was a surgical-boot," he said, "there was a spring attached to a leg-iron." Which was something I'd never notice.

"You haven't lost the touch," I said, and even by street-lighting

you could tell he was pleased, and we shook on it (and other things), his hand dry now, and warm.

"And I too have half the battle won for me," he said, and smiled. "Good night, and may God bless us all."

And I almost, but not quite said Amen . . . but just not quite.

"Good night, Laurence," I said, and he turned away and walked across the pavement and in, and I revved up and away through Beckenham back to Bromley.

"YOU'VE BEEN A LONG TIME GONE," SAID JOAN. "HOW DID YOU GET ON?"

So I told her, and she laughed about the twenty minutes.

"Do them the world of good," she said, "they've only got the three weeks to start getting used to each other again."

"Time enough . . ." and we got to making cocoa, and I gave *her* the time she needed to work up to it—which was at the first spoon of sugar in her mug.

"I like him," she said, "you must be right—I just don't see *how* he could have done any of the things people think he must have done, only Margaret was telling me about him, you know, and the more I hear the more I think there's something wrong somewhere . . . I mean, do you know the first thing he did yesterday morning when he'd missed you?"

"No," I said, and the cocoa was just the job.

"He lanced a boil on some woman's neck in that café you told me about, you know, where you saw him and didn't know him."

"Actually, it was on the side of her face—the girl did say something about a doctor and Auntie Florrie upstairs seeing to it, but I didn't connect."

She laughed. "I daren't quote your favourite quotation at you, dare I?"

"I'll connect *you* with a thick ear!" I said, and we went on from there, had a bit of a gentle lark around, bit of a kiss, bit of a cuddle, hung up a few pearls, and then sat holding hands on account it was *our* turn to be sixteen in that silver and singing landscape.

"What else did she tell you?" I said.

"Not very much really . . . how she met him in that hospital in Cambridge, they were going to get married and go out as missionaries, then him going out to Dr. Janek . . . She thinks they may try just to go out there now to work in an ordinary hospital,

and witness that way—no Missionary Society would even think of having him now, would they?”

“They’ll manage.”

“What did he tell you?”

So, through the last knockings of cocoa, I told her from Hanley . . .

“I knew *that*,” she said, “could have told you.”

. . . to the Crusader, from College to Germany, to Yumbala, and Janek, Kumali, Mulumbi, the lot—except I played down Mulumbi in case I gave her unquiet dreams.

“Poor Laurie,” she said, “what a lot he’s had to go through—I wonder what the truth of it all is?”

“Strikes me,” I said, “there’s more than a boil needs lancing.”

“We’ll probably never know,” and lumbered up out of the armchair we were in. “Come on, it’s getting ever so late.”

“All right,” I said, and shoved the mugs in the sink for morning, locked-up, we looked at the kids, and went to bed . . . few murmured words either way saying how much we loved each other, last kiss, and sleep feathered down to her . . . but I lay looking at the shadows on the ceiling for long enough, I don’t know how long, trains rumbling by every so often, cars belting round Holmsdale Road, Saturday night boozers rolling home, good night good night, couple of doors banged somewhere, heard the cats at it a street away, a dog barking, the church clock on Bromley Common, too far away to count the hours, just the chimes—then an owl scritch, sudden and strange (talons, beak, death being death even though that of mice and small things) . . . with, all the time, in another, darker, landscape, the leg bones splintering as a man, my brother, took three steps before dying.

SUNDAY

7

Thy wife shall be as a fruitful
vine by the sides of thine house:
thy children like olive plants
round about thy table.

PSALMS 128:3

THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT THING NEXT MORNING, BEING SUNDAY WITH nothing to do except whatever you think it right and proper to do on the first day of the week, and apart from being kidded out of bed at half-seven as usual *for* the usual, such as food and drink (*For what we are about to receive*, in this case Shredded Wheat and milk, fried eggs and bacon and tomatoes on account it *was* Sunday, and bread and home-made blackcurrant jam, and milk to drink all round, and whole-nut chocolate for being good, *may the Lord make us truly grateful, Amen*) and all the other things involved in being human, was best clothes and polished shoes and pennies in purses on account going to Church was on the agenda, quick quick.

So we got the leg of lamb into a slow oven (the lamb she'd decided on against ham salad), I packed her and the kids into the sidecar, just, and only just—what we would do ~~when~~ she'd had the baby would take some thinking about on account sidecars don't come any bigger—the bike started second time of kicking, and away we chugged in first down our road, round the corner . . . and then, bang bang, away through Bromley and Bellingham to Catford, St. Lawrence's Church, and on to Lewisham where the Denominational Church had its doors open, that the righteous might enter in.

Not that I did, on account I had my work more than cut out to get to Croydon—I just unpacked her and the kids a bit quick to avoid meeting people: and not that I would have stayed anyway on account they had a youth from the Missionary College booked

to preach who drove me up all manner of unholy walls—he'd been once before, and though they no doubt had to learn the tricks of the trade somewhere it was depressing to hear the strong meat of the word nibbled at by such as had need of its milk.

"I'll try to be back to pick you up," I said, "though it'll be a rush."

"Don't worry if you can't," she said, "I expect Mr. Jackson will give us a lift like he did last week."

"I won't bother then?"

"I wouldn't if I were you—we don't want an accident."

"Right you are then, we'll head for home and see to the dinner."

"Not too much salt in the spinach," she said, "you always put too much in."

And we had kisses all round, and, kids leading, she lumbered across to the open doors to I know not what social joys . . . I gave a wave, and revved up and away back to Catford, then through Sydenham and Norwood to Croydon and the Y.M.C.A. and made it with minutes to spare for half past.

NOT THAT HE WAS THERE, PEOPLE NEVER ARE—AT LEAST, I DIDN'T recognize him in the raincoat and crash-helmet by daylight, not at first.

"Hope you haven't been waiting long," I said when he'd seen me and walked across the pavement to the kerb, had his battered old black tin box by its leather handle, "I hate being kept waiting myself."

"No, not at all, I've just this moment come out."

And then the town hall clock clanked for half-eleven, and we smiled.

"Couldn't have managed better had we tried," I said. "Diving that in the sidecar, and hop on," and he did . . . and I revved up and away along the Sunday morning streets through Beckenham back to Bromley.

AT LEAST THAT WAS THE INTENTION, BUT, ONCE OUT OF CROYDON, instead of turning left I turned right for a change to come back through West Wickham, and got closer to Keston than was good for the dinner I'd promised to see to.

"Fancy a quick run into Keston?" I said as we waited at the lights, "we can go home by way of Bromley Common—we won't be all that late."

"By all means," he said over my shoulder. "The children were telling me about Keston yesterday."

And the lights changed, and away we chugged round the back road, left through the first of the pines . . . and I drew up and parked at the lower lake, not many people about, the day calm enough for deep reflection, just the ducks and swans blurring.

"How very pleasant," he said.

"Come on, we'll go a walk round—give us an appetite."

So we dumped the helmets in the sidecar, and strolled round the shining levels of the lake, the ripples washing in the reeds and all that caper, the roots of the pines contorting out of the stony earth, one or two anglers casting, a blackbird at it somewhere.

"It rather reminds me of Kumali's last hideaway," he said out of the nowhere he favoured. "The vegetation was denser of course, and the . . ." He smiled. "The notorious Kinyanjui mountains overshadowed the water to a far greater extent, but otherwise the setting is very similar . . . They were called 'The Two Tears of the Baluka'. They'd been, so the story ran, a halting place on one of the old slave routes down to the coast, and the area was shunned—which was why Kumali chose it. Another reason was that they were completely unfished and were alive with carp and barbel of all kinds—all good eating, and food wasn't exactly plentiful."

He was obviously loaded and primed, for what reason I didn't bother to find out. "Must have been some game there too."

"Well, yes, and the, er, men were good at trapping duiker and other small deer . . . they used to use snares very like our rabbit-wires, but larger, made from wire they got from several crashed aircraft."

"Wouldn't it have been easier to have shot them?"

"And have the troops around our ears? In any case, towards the end we had no ammunition, and it was as well their tribal ways died hard."

Then the penny dropped. "Crashed aircraft?"

And you could see the pain on his face, memory, old fears, old scars, and could understand why he was loaded . . . two years inner silence.

"The whole area was bombed from time to time," he said, "bombed, machine-gunned, splattered with jellied-petrol, all quite indiscriminately . . . and there was the occasional crash."

All it wanted was for a week-end jet to scream in over from Biggin Hill, but I think there's some kind of Sunday morning

truce on account sermons had to be heard or something. *Blessed are the peacemakers* . . .

"Because they were indiscriminate," he said, "and because they could be heard coming, these attacks rarely inflicted casualties—although what could we do about major burns under our circumstances? . . . But the effect upon wild life was catastrophic . . . it was nothing to find elephants with broken legs lying half-starved, as well as rhinos—and as for monkeys, we'd find whole communities incinerated beneath the scorched trees after such an attack, dead and dying, the little ones still clinging to their mothers. . . their cries were pathetic, human . . ." His smile was grim. "Although they were a welcome addition to our diet . . . And many creatures carried scars and partly-healed wounds. In fact wounded elephants and other large animals were more dangerous than the attacks themselves—without warning a pain-crazed brute might crash out of cover and . . ."

I gave him time—this wasn't from nowhere, but from a mind seared by more than jellied-petrol my taxes had helped pay for.

"A maddened buffalo once charged into us and trampled down and gored three men before plunging on into the bush . . . I have never seen such damage to the human body, never . . . Nothing could be done."

"Must have been wonderful for the pilots—the Italians did as much in Abyssinia."

"Again," he said, "they were merely doing what they considered their duty—those were their orders, and they obeyed them."

"Which was no defence at Nuremberg."

He smiled, easier with it. "Such men are not given to theorizing, least of all about terrorists."

But I'd promised Joan, and I let it go. "How many were you?"

"About thirty," he said. "At least, to begin with . . ."

And that was enough . . . The reflection was deeper now we were higher up the bank, the greens dark and intense.

"Wonderful stuff, water," I said. "There's a spring at the head of the other lake—Caesar's Well, though I don't suppose Caesar was ever within miles."

"No," he said, and seemed glad to change the subject, "but it's remarkable how legends grow. It only wants a casual word about an insignificant event, which, with imaginative additions, can easily grow into a myth accepted as complete truth. The past of Africa is rich in such legends."

"The present doesn't lag so far behind either."

But, if he saw it, he didn't bite. "I don't suppose our 'Two Tears' were ever really on a slave route, but the story can quite probably be explained by something like polluted water, an accident, anything—a romantic name for a possibly simple fact."

We walked on round and up the far slope to the other lake, the stones sliding beneath our feet, the roots snaring, but though I stumbled a couple or three times he seemed very sure of his step, alert and yet easy.

"There were also large numbers of tiger fish," he said, "that might have been another reason—beautiful creatures, graceful, with black stripes and an orange red tail . . . but armed with a set of formidable teeth, predators to the last bone. We had several ugly bites to deal with—they were ferocious."

"Must have set the security forces a good example," I said, and wished I hadn't.

"It was nothing to joke about . . . hunted like an animal for seven months, living on roots, raw meat, sometimes maggot-ridden—we couldn't always cook as the smoke would have been seen—the occasional wild honey. Always on the move, every sound a danger-signal . . . seeing men become animals . . ."

And there was the agony, there were the shadows . . . one of the anglers looked round at us from watching his float, and we walked between the lakes, left down by the constructed water-fall, the water free within its walls to do nothing but fall—several kids splashing about with bits of stick—and so back along the other shore. And, give or take ten yards, he had it beaten by half-way.

"You'll have to forgive these lapses into emotion," he said. "Perhaps soon I'll be able to—how shall I put it?"

"Recollect in tranquillity?"

"Yes," he said, "recollect—although I hope never without some emotion . . . And there again, I've not spoken about these things before."

"Margaret?"

"There are some things one doesn't like to discuss with . . ." and was lost for the word.

"Not even your own intended and all?" Which had him worried. "Believe me, tell her the lot, even if nobody else—you can't live with a woman you have secrets from. I know, I've tried."

He shook his head, and I knew how he felt . . . so I gave him an

out from my own nowhere. "Tell me about the Roman Catholics—you've only dropped hints so far."

A fish rose in the lake below—that or a kid had thrown a stone—the ripples circling and intersecting those from the ducks.

"Charity in all things," he said. "Difficult, extremely difficult . . . I say nothing about their creed, nor about their ordinary converts, most of whom, as I've said, remain heathen in thought and practice—but the clergy and nuns!"

I was surprised at the way he was sparking—but then, scratch most Protestants deep enough, and you'll find a Luther.

"When I was in prison," he said, "I read one or two pious works about their activities in Africa, and it made me cross to think that here was the myth being created of devoted, practical priests and nuns in cool white robes, smiling their blessing on every hand, loved and respected by every soul they meet. Rubbish!"

"Strong word," I said. "I like strong words."

"Far too many people are mealy-mouthed about Rome—one morning they might wake up and find it too late to be anything else."

"Those books are doing a great job—Mother Church is a dab-hand at creating the world in her own image . . . All of which rather puts us unconverted heathens up somewhat of a creek. 'Love one another', said the Man—and here you are, at one another with sharpened texts."

"Yes," he said. "I must have charity—it is only too easy to be right in the wrong direction, but their attitude to their fellow Christians is often intolerable . . . There was an example at Yumbaia just a few months before all the trouble. They have a small mission a few miles down river at a place called Lupola, run by six of seven Sisters of Charity, and not very efficiently run either—we would get all the surgical cases sooner or later as they had absolutely no facilities for surgery, none, and we'd get most of the more serious medical cases too, although I must admit they were extremely good at ante- and post-natal work, extremely good. Although even then we eventually got all the difficult cases, prognosed sections and the like . . . Now Janek, having been a Catholic, had a soft spot in his heart for those Sisters, but he'd never had any kind of either social or Christian exchange with them in all his ten years."

"Must have been a strict rule they kept."

"Not through want of trying on his part either. There were no

other Europeans for miles until they began to build the dam, but all he ever saw of any of them was silent nurses in a small hospital he was never invited to enter."

"They're not encouraged to make contacts with the world, are they? least of all the male world. And Janek must have been overpowering at close quarters—a Protestant devil, needing much holy water to combat."

"But in ten years?"

"How did they get the cases they couldn't deal with to you?"

"Native workers brought them, and sometimes even literally left them on the step. In my own two years there were several such left which no person with our standards of medical training could have left, quite apart from inflicting a journey over rutted tracks on patients generally in no condition to travel. It would surely have been better to have sent for us to come."

"Don't they claim to be nuns first and nurses second?"

"Then they have no business to be nursing," he said. "If they want to save their own souls at the expense of their patients I call it selfishness, however many logic-chopping arguments they may have for it."

We stopped and looked at the lake, and simmering was the only word for him. "How come they're so poorly equipped? Surely the largest and richest Church in the . . ."

"Too busy with stained-glass windows and things of wood and stone—vestments of fine gold over corruption and spiritual hollowness."

And he was obviously working himself up into a fine old lather, which made a change from his usual circumspection, and you could see how he'd come to be smeared with some of the things they'd said he'd done, the anger beneath *his* vestments.

"What about that nice new Headquarters in the most expensive chunk of London?" I said. "That the same thing?"

"We were not poorly equipped."

"There was the first move though—what about supplies in cardboard boxes instead of wood?"

"It only happened the once," he said, and I conceded the point, having the set and match in mind, and we let be . . . "Yes," he said, "ten, almost twelve years with never any kind of human exchange—and then, very early one morning, before dawn, two of them arrived, one acting as chaperone, and the other, much younger, an extremely sick young woman indeed: Sister Mary

Paschal—I shall never forget poor dear Sister Mary, an Italian from Florence, a most beautiful face . . . on examination she had advanced carcinoma of the cervix, an epidermoid carcinoma.”

“Cancer?”

“Extremely advanced—how she’d endured the pain, the almost continual bleeding, the foul-smelling discharge I don’t know. Apparently she’d accepted it all in the name of Jesus, and her little Community regarded it as an example of heroic sanctity. Had she come at the first symptoms it would have been a case of relatively simple surgery, but this growth was both extensive and ulcerating—but she bore it all with a serenity which was, to say the least, disquieting, and her smile . . .” He shook his head. “Such useless courage . . . However, we told Sister Nomusa, our head nurse, a fine Zulu woman and one of the finest theatre sisters I’ve ever had the good fortune to work with—trained by Janek I’m happy to say—we told her of the circumstances, and she at once gave up her own room and we installed Sister Mary and her chaperone in there—I do believe she’d rather have died there and then, than have endured the public wards . . . Later that day Janek confirmed by biopsy the diagnosis I’d made, and we prepared her for operation.” He shook his head again. “Such courage, such serenity—it was heart-breaking to see such a young woman almost glad to die.”

A line of ducks swam down the lake in our direction, their ripples arrowing, and the blackbird was still at it somewhere . . . the ripples spread outwards, intersecting, and the reflection settled.

“But she did not die,” he said, “and her chaperone seemed almost to regret it. We had no radiotherapy facilities at Yumbala, and so we had to rely upon extended surgery, in this case Wertheim’s hysterectomy, which normally has a significant mortality . . . But Sister Mary pulled through, to the great joy of us all, Janek, Sister Nomusa, and all the staff and patients as well—she was naturally extremely weak, but she was also what I can only describe as radiant—her first words were, ‘Jesus Christ be praised’ . . . such faith.”

And he was quiet for long enough, and, for the first time, I thought about the dinner that should have been seen to by now.

“Shall we make a move?” I said.

“By all means,” he said, and we made for where I’d parked.

“How did she make out?”

“This is the point. The very next day a group of native workers came to take her back—surgery of such extent, slight post-operative

shock, and yet her Superior wanted her trundled back over some of the worst country in that part of Africa! It would have been criminal! I refused out of hand, and Janek, to his great credit when one considers the pull Rome exerts upon her . . . her separated brethren, Janek refused to have her moved under any circumstances for at least a month. And despite a visit from the Mother Superior herself, a charming lady in the event, not to mention one from a blustering loud-mouthed priest who ought to have had better manners, Sister Mary and her chaperone stayed for that month—and I must say to our great inconvenience, as the room was well away from the hospital, and Sister Nomusa had to room with another nurse which was a blow to her prestige . . . But eventually Sister Mary was well enough to travel—and many of us, many of us wept to see her go, and she herself would have been happier to have cried, I'm sure of that, but they have these rules about the expression of emotion, and she merely smiled that unforgettable smile of hers . . . Which would have been all well and good, except that we began to hear tales from our daily clinic patients, which they'd heard from the workers at the Catholic Mission, about how badly we'd treated the sick white nun, making her sleep in native quarters, keeping her against her will when her sickness had been cut away so that we could make her into a Protestant Christian—and even that we'd charged her much money for the cure."

"Didn't you send in a bill then?"

"Janek wouldn't hear of it—we did usually make a charge of all who could afford to pay, as the Baluka wouldn't place any reliance on a cure they'd got for nothing, but we never charged what you could call the market value—but Janek wouldn't hear of it, and neither would I . . . Sister Mary did us good." And his smile was sad, wistful more than anything. "She gave me her Miraculous Medal—it must have been her most precious possession."

(So that was the where and the why of it.)

We walked on past a few more anglers, none had landed anything that we'd seen, three or four swans waddling in the shallows, another couple drifting on the still water among the bits of sodden bread and cigarette packets and icecream wrappings by the lake's edge, and reached where I'd parked.

"What did you do about the tales?" I said.

"What, in charity, could we have done?"

And the "in charity" bit had me snookered, and I shrugged, and

we got the helmets out and on, and I wheeled on to the road. "Still, at least they had the humility to send you the cases they couldn't deal with."

"That is where I lack the charity," he said. "All mission stations and hospitals have to submit returns to the civil medical authorities—too many deaths, and someone waits to know why."

"You mean they were using you as undertakers? hedging their bets?"

"Yes," he said, and then gave a bit of a chuckle. "My father used to like a flutter on the horses—he would say things like that."

"Star's Orders then," I said. "The Dinner Stakes."

So we got on fore and aft . . . and away we went round the rest of the back road, turned left at the top, and belted at something more than thirty down through Bromley Common to the Farnborough Road, and so home.

BUT JOAN AND THE KIDS HAD US BEATEN TO IT BY TWENTY LENGTHS and the kitchen-sink—and it was the kitchen-sink she was at, peeling the potatoes.

"Mr. Jackson give you a lift then?" I said.

"Yes," she said, "but he just couldn't stay to do these."

Which, of course, had an edge to it, and Kinman (no, it was Laurence now, had to be—couldn't go on all my life a distance away from people), Laurence wasn't slow to notice it and started to get worried . . . he'd learn in time, rough with the smooth, thick edges as well as pearls.

"Here, let me peel those," he said, but it wasn't any good, she just crumpled into tears—and there we were, stuck with the fact that she *was* within a week or so of her days being accomplished or whatever . . . and it was just as well the kids were playing next-door with the Palmers.

Anyway, we managed: I cased her out of it whilst Laurence finished the dinner, which wasn't all that much of a chore as the leg of lamb was almost done, and he only had to boil and mash the potatoes and get some spinach going . . . by which time we were back in enough double-harness to fiddle with the extras like mint sauce, and afters and custard.

"All right?" I said.

"You just get them in from the Palmers," she said, "that's what you've got to do . . ." So I knew she was, and winked at Laurence as he fussed with the knives and forks on the table to seem not to

be intruding—and I went for the kids . . . and then it was all hands to the table . . .

We got them sat down, he carved as we thought it would do him good to be useful—and it was strangely beautiful to see him at it, even with our battered old knife he was neat and deft, sure of himself, ordered, each slice lifted whole: there was that pleasure you get when you see anything done well. We also let him say Grace as the kids seemed to want him to (*Thank you for the food we take*, in this case, as well as the meat and two veg, the last of the bottled plums from last year for afters, and milk for the kids and tea for us, *and bless us now for Jesus' sake, Amen*); and, as before, we talked and ate and laughed—but though the tremor was still there if you looked for it, he was easy with it all, obviously had a way with kids, had them sitting up and taking more notice than that . . . until, falling half-one, Joan started rattling the dishes.

"If we're to be there for three o'clock," she said.

SO WE SHOVED THEM IN THE SINK FOR WHENEVER LATER WE COULD, repolished scruffy little shoes, waited whilst she did herself up a bit, the odd dab here and there of *jour de madame*, then I packed her and the kids in the sidecar, Laurence and I got on fore and aft . . . the bike started first time of kicking, being warm, and away we chugged, labouring just that bit on account of the tonnage on board, down our road, round the corner, the engine glad to be in first . . . and then, bang bang bang, away through Bromley and Bellingham to Catford, bang bang, getting used to it, Brockley Cross, Peckham Rye, the Elephant and Castle, Waterloo Bridge, and so to the deserted streets and squares of that part of Sunday London where the Denomination's new building stood brand-ceramic-new . . . and made it as near half-two as makes no difference. Which, for three o'clock, wasn't bad.

BUT, GOOD OR BAD, WE WEREN'T THE FIRST, NOT BY SEVERAL hundred horse-power we weren't. There must have been at least twenty or thirty cars drawn up along each side of the street already, family saloons mostly, Austins and Fords and that, a nice Wolseley, couple of scooters, and a glittering great big American schooner, Technicolor all over, tail-fins that would have been useful on a jet-bomber, and rear-lights big enough for something trans-continental in trains. So I squeezed in behind that, and we not so much got off and out as slunk.

"Fenton Miller Gould," I said to Laurence, "sure as little apples."

"It can hardly be his—isn't he flying over for the occasion?"

"He could have in that."

The kids were already out and raring, I helped Joan to lumber, we dumped all our removables and things in the sidecar, and there we were, other people walking on the pavement too, lot of West Indians (or is it that you notice them more?), not a long chalk from the main entrance . . . the ladder gone, INTO ALL THE WORLD finished and gilded, Fred Epstein must have worked all day Saturday, the rate he'd been finicking, though it looked well enough.

"Certainly done themselves proud," said Joan, "must have cost an awful lot of money."

"You haven't seen the place yet."

"Wonder why they had to make it so posh?"

Which was the one question didn't need answering—and we walked on round the side to the doors of the Main Hall, lot of other people on their way now, twenty to three by the clock on another kind of insurance company next building along, and I watched Laurence taking it all in—the gold lettering where they were to have neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in their purses, let alone over their doors; the six floors of organization and terrazzo and lino-tiles and strip-lighting and fitting blue Wilton carpet where the Son of Man had not where to lay his head . . . and my thoughts were obviously his thoughts: galvanized-iron roofs under the equatorial sun, clapped-out trucks, cardboard cartons, having to go carefully with supplies once you'd got them, counting every dose, every injection, skimping bandages, scraping, making do . . . and he noticed me watching him, and smiled, sad again. No that he was so nervous as you'd expect him to be, just walking along holding hands with the kids, bit shabby-looking, worn, and yet somehow eager to be in and at something or other. Couldn't make him out—me? I'd have been scared-stiff in his thin shoes.

BUT THERE WERE THE GLASS-DOORS JACKED OPEN AT THE BOTTOM OF the wide steps down (of course! the Hall was the basement of the building—I'd been wondering where it fitted in), one, two three, the inner doors further back also open, a sight of the stage, choir, other people entering, more West Indians, cheerful lot, ushers waiting inside, so we also made it into the mood-music (an organ

subdued and distant), kids first . . . and who should be one of the ushers, black skirt, white blouse, handful of blue programmes, but Barbara, tall, ankles not so thick in silk-stockings (always your best for Sunday), smiling nervously as she saw us, but with enough of what it took to come on over.

"Hello, Joan," she said, "Dr. Kinman . . ." Then to me, "Glad you were able to come."

"Big doings," I said, "couldn't resist it."

And so through "Hello" and "How are you?" and "What a long time since I've seen you" and "Aren't the children getting tall? just like you" (which made the eldest cringe), Joan, responding a bit insincerely I thought . . . and Laurence there on sufferance, neither part nor parcel, Barbara not so much ignoring him (which would have been bearable) as merely smiling the smile of the Saved in his direction every so often, making with the mouth, solicitous at tongue-level . . . and the feeling I'd had for her over egg, chips, and peas slid quietly off my plate with the scrapings.

Laurence, too, knew what the score was, but he stood there, still holding hands with the kids, polite, apparently listening to the organ swirling from the inner doors, wearing his Christianity with a difference . . . two boys, seven, eightish, skylarking about on one of the contemporary acid-yellow and black settees along the side wall, feet all over the cushions, nobody stopping them, thick ear apiece wouldn't have done them any harm . . . other people passing on their way in, some looking at us as though they remembered his face from somewhere (he'd already been spotted by one of the sombre youths at the back of the entrance, who said something to the next up Jacob's ladder of command, same pattern of youth but one rung older, who, in his turn, looked, and then scuttered away round the back as though this would do his chances of ordination a power of good when the news got to the right presidential ears) . . . and I stuck the chit-chat for long enough. Besides, the kids were getting impatient.

"How much are the programmes?" I said to Barbara.

"Oh yes," she said, "you'd better be going in, otherwise your seats won't be saved . . . A shilling." So I bought one. "Must see you afterwards," she said to Joan, "didn't know how much news there was."

. . . and we moved on towards the inner doors, the youth watching us . . . and then, loud enough for the rest of us, loud enough for everybody with ears to hear, Barbara called: "Dr.

Kinman—Mother and Father have brought your little girl, I expect you'll see them, they're at the front saving you a seat."

Little girl! And pieces of the pattern seemed to fit—but it was a new one on us, and no mistake!

"Thank you," he said, quite calmly, but you could tell it had him embarrassed, and he began to glance at the people about, not much, but enough . . . and the people mostly looked other ways . . . and the dogs prowled back from where we'd managed to drive them.

I glared back at Barbara, and she simpered at me as though to say that now I knew what she had against him—and I could have done without her smiling teeth. To think I'd flashed a Luncheon Voucher on her and all!

"That the little girl you know just about my age?" said one of the kids, which was the question only she could have asked.

"Don't be rude!" said Joan to her, snappy, not knowing quite what to say or do, "it's no business of yours."

"That's all right," said Laurence. ". . . Yes, my dear, she's my little girl, and her name's Anna."

"Can we play with her?" said one of the others.

"Why yes, of course you can—I expect she'll be ever so pleased to play with you."

Which was enough for them, and they dragged him on towards the doors . . . and he turned to us, letting them go . . .

"Wait there," said Joan, "there at the doors."

. . . and smiled, tears in his eyes.

"I know you'll be too polite to ask," he said, his voice choked, "Anna's my adopted girl—Mr. and Mrs. Moss have looked after her . . . while . . ." And it broke you to see him. "Anna Magdalena, after her mother . . . your husband will explain—please forgive me, I had intended . . ."

But he turned from us, gathered the waiting kids, people staring, especially the youth, excused himself through a congestion of West Indians round the doors, and went on into the Hall, lonely in that loving crowd, a stranger among his own.

"Poor Laurie," said Joan, and she was crying too, just what we needed . . . So I did the best we could . . .

"Off!" I said to the two boys bouncing on the settee (*and* they did, a bit quick and lively at that), and we sat down, people staring, looking away, Barbara selling programmes ten yards up wind pretending not to have noticed . . .

"What about our places?" said Joan, still sniffing.

"They'll be kept," and stared down several more people interested enough to watch but not to help, gave her my dry handkerchief . . .

"I'm all right," and blew her nose, "aren't I silly?"

. . . and told her about the girl he ought to have saved, twenty, Polish.

"And he adopted the baby?" she said. "Wonder how he was able to not married? it's ever so difficult."

"Kids were ten a penny in Germany those days," I said. "Fit?"

"Do I look all right?"

"You'll do," I said, and helped her up.

"One thing," she said, "try not to let the meeting get you strung up—it always spoils it for me to see you getting bitter and irritated."

"Me and the Trappists," I said, and we made for the doors, the two boys watching us carefully, the youth still doing more than his stint. "Bet you won't sleep for excitement tonight," I said to him as we went through.

And I didn't give Barbara the satisfaction of looking back—one day the wind would turn about in her direction, time enough.

ONCE INSIDE WE REFUSED USHERS, AND STOPPED TO SEE IF WE COULD see Laurence and the kids.

Now from going to and fro in the environs of Holborn Viaduct, and from walking up and down in the streets and vistas of that part of London, I have seen many of the works that are done these days under the name of building: blocks of L.C.C. flats, blocks of private enterprise offices (no private money in putting up flats, Jack), libraries, petrol-stations, shop-fronts—and that Hall had been sub-contracted to a man who had seen many of them too, and had forgotten nothing except the petrol-pumps.

It had the lot, and the latest lot at that . . . a broad way of dark-blue Wilton carpet leading down the centre aisle to where the electric organ squatted (every frequency guaranteed reverent), rows of already occupied tip-up seats the same blue, artificial windows, air-conditioning (you could smell the chemical purity, almost taste the cleanliness), diffused cosiglow heating, engineered acoustics, and (who could doubt?) a pebble-floored moat between us and the raised platform, a moat luxuriant with (who else could

doubt?) a pot-planted garden of all manner of indoor plants, each after his kind.

"An awful lot of money," said Joan, "it must have done."

"All contributions gratefully received," I said. "Tax-free legacies especially welcome."

Of course the big feature was the United Nations kind of map of all the world decorating the wall high above the choir at the back of the platform—Africa the red centre.

"There they are," she said, and there they were, within shadow of the pot-plants, waving like mad, and we ventured—and the carpet was foam-rubber based. "Could do with a yard or two of this in the front room."

"Debilitating," I said, quieter than usual on account the mood-music did a good job, had you intimidated, people looking at our progress for all that—and she knew a couple or thrce, exchanged smiles . . .

"We've saved you seats," whispered the kids from a good fifteen, twenty yards, "and Anna's going to play with us," all four kneeling on their seats facing back our way.

And Laurence, at the end of the row, said something to an elderly couple sitting in front of him, and then stood up ready to let us to our saved seats . . . and Anna, kneeling beside him, was dark, sturdy about the shoulders, intense black hair in a tight pony-tail, small white ribbon, black eyes, beautiful face, high cheekbones, white cotton dress on . . . and the elderly couple turned in their seats, and you could see Barbara and Margaret in the mother, everybody smiling, Laurence, Anna, bit solemn by our standards, probably with being brought up by the equivalent of grandparents . . .

"Anna's going to play with us," said the kids, "and she's the same age as our Kath."

And the two little girls the same age looked at each other and smiled, and the ceremony of innocence was re-established.

Anyway, we got to our seats, the kids between us and Laurence at the end of the row, everybody said all the usual words, introductions, names, hello, how are you? very well thank you, what a lot of weather we're having for the time of year . . . and Mr. and Mrs. Moss were no more the wrong side of seventy than we were, more likely a comfortable sixty (which shews you the state Barbara was in to give me the impression they were in a decline), and we took to them at once even though the guaranteed reverence

prevented anything other than this and that in undertones . . . and the kids were well away in the meadows under another sky than strip-lighting, Laurence was with it and easy, Joan relaxed, great mother of us all (at least, that's what she looked like), the people around settled back to their own affairs having had a good screw at ours . . . and I took in some more of the sub-contracting.

You couldn't be off missing this map of all the world, but I'd seen maps before, and the choir was the average College one, though not so tightly-packed as usual, seemed to be missing a front row . . . youths in black suits and bow-ties, girls in black skirts and white blouses, their leader (a youth we knew, name of Wesley Garland, could have sold soap on the telly with the best) mingling among them with last minute instructions or something . . .

And so I was left with the two empty chairs on the platform, the reading-desk with its built-in microphone, and the sheet-draped plinth set up at the heart of all. Not that it looked much, just white crepe paper pinned over a rough old wooden stand, but this was it, you could see some of the shape of the head beneath the sheet, and I knew Laurence was looking at it too, must have been strange for him, but I hadn't the heart to look at his face.

So I opened the programme, and Joan and I began to look at what things had been prepared for us that were there, and blue was obviously the Denominational colour that year—it was all blue, embossed covers, ink, even the paper was a pale and tasteful shade:

The Committee wishes to express its appreciation to The Vision and Venture Press Ltd. (Programme), the Peniel Missionary College Chorale (Vocal Items), Sister F. Stone (Floral Arrangements), and Brother S. Ford (Photographs), and to all others who have contributed to the success of the Ceremony.

"Floral Arrangements," I said. "That Mrs. Stone?"

"Yes—used to be Felicity Cooper before she was married, hasn't changed one little bit, hasn't got the least idea . . . Those were their two boys just now, they're just let run wild."

(" . . . a standing need of prayer," he'd said, "and yet more prayer . . .")

And there he was in blue opposite his printed message for that hour, ten years younger than he'd been for fifteen years:

My Dearly Beloved Brethren and Sisters,

I give you Greetings as you assemble in this beautiful new Hall which your generous free-will offerings have made possible. It has been a great joy to have been privileged to participate in its inception, and I am sure that I voice all the unspoken yearnings of your hearts when I pray that it will be of infinite spiritual benefit to the Missionary Cause (Mark 16:15) to which we are all dedicated.

To this end it will be known as the Stefan Janek Memorial Hall, in whose honour we are here met and assembled.

PASTOR P. STONE, *President.*

And there on the next page was Fenton Miller Gould himself, with his printed message for that hour, which, knowing his style, we didn't bother with . . .

"Why do they always cock their head on one side?" she said.

. . . but turned over to *The Last Picture Ever Taken Of Dr. Stefan Janek Before His Tragic Death At The Hands Of Those He Had Bravely Led Forth Out Of Darkness: FORGIVE THEM FATHER, THEY KNEW NOT WHAT THEY DID* . . . and there was the well-known face again, smiling into the sun, huts out of focus in the background, the left cheek badly re-touched—so the man had a burn-scar, a defect, so why didn't they leave it there?

"Something about him," she said, "you must admit that."

Out of the side of my eye I could see that Laurence had caught sight of the page, and I didn't quite know whether or not to let on that I knew, and had even less heart to look.

"Hurry up then," she said, "let's see the order of service."

So I turned over the pages of Special Announcements and Urgent Appeals and Challenging Messages for that hour to the centre-spread:

DEDICATORY SERVICE



Sunday, Aug. 8th, at 3.00 p.m.

PROCESSIONAL

Welcome *The President*
Hymn No. 443,

"All People That On Earth Do Dwell" . . . *W. Garland*

Prayer	<i>The President</i>
Offering	"
Introduction of the Speaker	"
ADDRESS AND UNVEILING	
	Pastor Fenton Miller Gould
Choral Item	<i>Peniel Missionary College Chorale</i>
Dedicatory Prayer	<i>The President</i>
Hymn No. 351,	
"O Praise Ye The Lord!"	<i>W. Garland</i>
Benediction	<i>The President</i>

RECESSIONAL

Organist: T. Stearns

"Is this Pastor Gould the one who wrote all that about Laurie you told me about?" she said. so quietly that Laurence wouldn't hear that I almost couldn't, "only there are several of them, brothers, all in good positions."

"The one," I said. "He also wrote that Janek book we have—it was on top of the radio."

"It's got ever such a lot of pictures in," said one of the kids, "all black men ever so poorly."

So I gave the little D-O-N-K-E-Y with the big E-A-R-S the programme to pass along to Laurence, who smiled thanks—and we watched the antics of the youth at the organ . . .

"It's already ten past," she said, which was something that must have been drawn to the attention of some of those contributing to the success of the ceremony, for the organ suddenly oscillated into something second-cousin to *Onward Christian Soldiers*, only slower—the Chorale perked up, and most heads turned to see where they were looking . . . except me, except Laurence, though I suppose our reasons were different.

And then the Chorale stood up, solemn and composed, all eyes raised to some vision twenty feet above our heads—which, apparently, was the tip-off for us lot to rise too, because the up-standing wave flowed back . . .

"I can't," said Joan, "I just can't—I feel that heavy."

Laurence was already standing, which gave me no excuse, so I did with a scrape of grace.

"Stay where you are, love," I said, "sit this one out."

And there we stood like one of the umpteen relics of the True Cross was on its way, the organ shrilling on every available valve,

the kids enjoying every least move, Mrs. Moss smiled at Joan . . . and then the first of what had to be the PROCESSIONAL stepped measuredly into view down the lowly path of service free of the centre aisle, and I had to look even though Laurence still didn't.

THERE WERE TWO FILES OF WHAT WERE PROBABLY THE BEST-LOOKING members of the Chorale in long red robes, girls on the right, youths on the left, couple by couple at ten-yard intervals, de-luxe style *Church Hymnals* (The Ultimate for Any Occasion, Bound in Rich Natural Morocco, Fine India Paper, Gold Edges: \$21.00) clasped in reverent posture as per practice, all in step, obviously (as more came to view) graded for size, shortest at the front, tallest at the back, on and down till the leading pair reached the organ, which divided them to the left and right, along the front of the moat, and up the steps on either side of the platform, still in step, must have taken hours of rehearsal, and still they came on down the aisle, the organist going into the first repeat, those on the platform turning at their appointed places in the empty front row to face us, another couple, another ten yards, another couple, divide, steps, turn, the robes massing now from the centre outwards, the organist craning into his mirror to see how much longer . . . and then the two Presidents side by side, Mr. Stone the shorter of the two, Fenton Miller Gould lean and round-shouldered, but both well-tailored, both desiring a good work, blameless as they knew how, sober, also in step, de-luxe style Bibles in place of hymnals (One You Will be *Thrilled* to Own, Concordance Edition with Helps, Ultra-thin Oxford India Paper, Gold Edges: \$27.00—except that Mr. Stone's looked brand-unopened-new and Fenton Miller Gould's had seen years of service), and both (if I'm any judge) pretending not to know that Laurence was there at all, let alone close enough to touch the sleeve of his second-hand suit.

And still he didn't look, the muscles along his jaw tight, and Joan was watching him too, on the brink of tears again, mouth trembling . . . so I sat down to be with her . . .

"I'll be all right," she said, and Mrs. Moss was concerned, but we managed without much fuss, the kids curious but easily deflected with sweets brought for some such purpose (that and boredom), and so I missed the final ascent of the platform, just heard the organ slide away into the coughing silence, and the voice of Mr. Stone, distant and yet intimate over the microphone . . .

"Shall we just bow a moment in silent prayer before the Throne of Grace?"

. . . and all the time Laurence standing there looking up at the map of all the world, Africa the red centre . . .

"Amen, amen."

. . . and everybody sat down . . .

"He can't just go on bottling it all up like this," she said to me in the fuss of settling, "it breaks my heart to see him."

Anyway, Mr. Stone took it from there into the well-oiled routine, smooth as you like, no bother, no hands—gave us greetings as we there met and assembled, eyes on the move all the time, his smile part of the sub-contracting . . . passed to this youth, Wesley Garland, who rose from the heart of the Chorale in one slow movement, light blue drape-shape with satin revers, black trousers, white shirt, dark blue bow-tie, first sproutings of a thin moustache, and did as he was bidden, leading out on the worship of God by the use of Hymn No. 443, conducting *us* like we were the Huddersfield Choral Society, all standing and cheerful as was right and proper—himself singing in the strangled tenor of the untrained, sobs of feeling between gasps, his hands held out the way Al Jolson started . . . the Chorale still intent on the vision, mouths roundly open, hymnals held well out, the organist with all buttons pushed, all switches on, big deal . . . and then, all praise and glory given, down again into the prayer, all heads re-bowed before the Throne of Grace . . .

"Amen, amen."

. . . and even smother into the free-will offering, there being no people more generous than those there met and assembled, experience had proved it time and again, the Lord, as was known, ever loving cheerful givers . . . and the baskets came passing round, several ten-bob notes, and we put in our tanners, chink chink, which worked out at half-a-crown the family (couldn't afford to be that cheerful too often), but I noticed that neither Laurence nor the little girl put anything in, though it worried her to be left out of it when she saw ours . . . and so to the Introduction of the Speaker, which was where I began to get interested enough to sit up from the slump I was in—this was what we'd come for, though Laurence was still sitting there apparently looking up through the red shape of Africa into some other landscape, some other country of the mind, probably what two years inside did to you.

ANYWAY, THE LAST TANNER CHINKED, THANKSGIVING WAS OFFERED, and Mr. Stone stayed standing at the reading-desk . . . and behind his smile you could see it all: *he* was the man who should have been delivering the address, he was the author of the authorized biography wasn't he? the life-long friend of the Martyr of Yumbala whose praise we were there met and assembled to sound? . . . but, only being the British President, and a Christian whose promotion depended upon his Christianity as the Denomination judged it, he was merely to announce the speaker, put the trumpet to another's lips. But still, he smiled, more than I could have done.

"My dearly beloved brethren and sisters," he said when he'd made us wait for it, got as quiet as he wanted, "it is now my great joy and privilege to introduce to you now the man we have all come to hear, the speaker for this hour—Pastor Fenton Miller Gould, President of the Overseas Missions Assembly, from our World Headquarters, in Nashville, Tennessee." Most eyes turned, and their object received their gaze calmly—what was an audience of less than a thousand when ten thousand were available in Nashville, Tennessee? "A man who needs little introduction from me—a son of the Founder of our Denomination, who has not only dedicated himself to our people in a life-time of selfless service, accomplishing much in the outreach of the Message, but who also served as the President of our African Assembly during the last two troubled years of Dr. Janek's life, during which time he had an unrivalled . . ." He paused, and this was for emphasis—and I thought of a rival. "An unrivalled opportunity of coming to know that great man as no other man can have known him." He turned to his Presidential brother, this stranger we were entertaining not in the least unawares. "It is my great joy and privilege, then, to give greetings to our brother on your behalf, and to welcome him here . . . Pastor Fenton Miller Gould."

Who rose from his seat and joined his brother at the reading-desk, where brotherly hands held brotherly shoulders for a brief moment of spontaneous brotherly love, and then Mr. Stone returned to his seat, leaving us primed, his duty all ended or something.

AND IF HE HAD MADE US WAIT FOR IT, FENTON MILLER GOULD HAD him beaten at the game—he had every trick in the book: Bible opened, notes arranged, glanced at, put down just so, glasses taken out (top-executive model, heavy and black and adjusted, us looked

at through them, almost face by face, then the slow smile, sincerity in every tooth . . . and I risked a glance at Laurence, and (so help me) he was smiling, not much, but enough, probably at the memory of repeat interview sessions directed towards the evaluation of the Christian focal-point of his character-pattern or something . . . but the voice, when he got round that far, was a pleasant one, soft and flowing.

"My dear brethren and sisters," (mid-west Bible-belt with a slight drawl of Southern corruption), "I count it a great, a tremendous privilege to be on assignment among you this beautiful afternoon hour in your striking new Hall erected to the undying memory of this great, this thrilling man we are here congregated together to commemorate. Through one of the miracles of that modern science we are ever prevalent to forget, I have been freely enabled to leave my home situated not too far distant from your World Headquarters in the United States, half the world around, and fly by jet airplane at the speed almost of sound itself to assign with you here in your striking new Hall to assist dedication of it to the vibrant, the living memory of the man whom, as your President has already told you, the man whom it was my great privilege and experience to know and love as a mighty worker for God during the last two all too brief years of selfless life prior to his brutal, his tragic, his challenging murder whilst I had the concurrent privilege of serving the Master as your African Assembly President . . ."

He paused, I doubt from need, and it was as though a brimming river had stopped in mid-ripple . . . he was obviously used to buying time on such as Station WXLX or Radio Luxembourg when no second dared be left unfilled without a sense of loss accountable in dollars . . . paused, took off his glasses, and looked around as though for the first time.

"And what a striking new Hall it is you have builded, truly worthy of its cause and purpose. It should ever be borne in mind that the Divine Architect evaluates our buildings just as surely as soul-worthiness, which inspiring knowledge should decidedly influence our thinking as we plan for our Denomination. Heaven carefully scrutinizes our projects, there should be no promptings of pride and selfishness, and around us now as we meet together is proof positive of the measure of success you have met with in according to the Divine Standard. I shall not soon forget this Hall, structured as it is to measure up to present-day challenges."

Which seemed to be his first note dealt with, for he put his glasses back on, turned over a sheet, and started again.

"But I hear you question Why? Why has this man flown half the world around to visit with, to assign with us here? What message has he got for us this afternoon hour? What is his Christian experience?" He paused again, money obviously being no object, and I risked another glance at Laurence, and his small crinkle of a smile was (so help me) affectionate—this was the man with the hatchet, and all he could do was to be kindly affectioned. Wouldn't have been my continuance, not by a deed, not by a smile.

"Let me tell you brethren and sisters, let me give answer to these questions . . . I am here, not through any especial talent, but simply, explicitly, precisely because I was privileged to know and to work with Dr. Stefan Vladimir Janek during those last two years of his days upon this troubled old world. For no other reason than this, none, but that I worked with this mighty man of God and because I can enumerate it a privilege to have shared, in howsoever insignificant a capacity, whilst yet he lived, in the devoted, selfless, untiring, sacrificial experience of this man among men, and was enabled to look upon him in the flesh and regard as friend, colleague, and co-worker in Christ, for which God be praised in the heights and breadths of His Heaven."

Another pause as though revelation had been vouchsafed (glasses off), the silver cord loosed—and you had to admit it was a fine flow he had, no haste, no urgency, but equally no hesitation, no room left for a thought in edgeways . . . and the pause lasted just time enough (glasses on), two three . . .

"Now it is not my purpose, neither do I deem it to be, it is not my purpose this afternoon hour to retell you the narrative, the thrilling narrative of this mighty man of God—you know it all too closely for my repetition. You have all read of it, been thrilled by it in Denominational publications too numerous to enumerate, you have all read of it as accounted newsworthy in your great British newspapers, in the many wonderful books which have been authored and published even by secularists. Indeed . . ."

He turned largely to Mr. Stone (glasses off), a big expansive movement.

". . . his experience has been chronicled by many tongues more eloquent than my own. On this very platform sits one who has authored with what can only be a pen of inspiration a masterly,

moving, finalized book on this great man, which, brethren and sisters, you would do well to read and make your own."

And Mr. Stone squirmed in what I chose to think was fake embarrassment—another free plug for the product . . . and I noticed that Laurence was with Africa again, looking up, still smiling, but at something 'within himself, had to be, it wasn't the same kind of smile . . . and the smile of Fenton Miller Gould included us in the afterglow (glasses on), then he went serious, and you could tell that he'd gotten through his pre-address notes and was now working up to a lather.

"No, brethren and sisters, it is not my purpose this afternoon hour to chronicle the experience of Dr. Stefan Janek, this man who projected himself uniquely unto the uttermost parts of the earth, to retell you again of his humble origins and birth in faraway Poland, now, alas, behind the Iron Curtain, nor of his childhood and struggle for education, the College training his heart yearned for, which, in that backward Catholic country, was at a premium. Neither am I to memorialize his ultimate success, academic and spiritual, his ultimate conquest of environment, background, and religion, his flight from Europe as the German jackboots thundered into his homeland that fateful August, his participation in the mighty work of harnessing the motive power of the universe, that work which brought him the coveted Nobel Prize, none more worthy. Neither am I to dwell upon that great, that thrilling fact of his long life, the one fact he always regarded as the high-point, the peak and climax of his career, his conversion to a knowledge of the Saving Power of Christ Jesus as a Personal Saviour, when, subsequent to a reactor incident which subjected him to what, without the mighty healing power of the Great Physician, to what would have been a lethal dose of radiation, he accepted the Truth and all which that entailed in terms of an enlarged vision, a deeper sense of dedicated service, for, as we live in the high-tide of missionary endeavour, so, at the forefront, was Dr. Stefan Janek, living a life of Christ-like Christianity. This fact alone, if none other, should lead us to pause, for here was a man, prominent in his chosen field, who yet chose to renounce, in the full flood of his prime, all this world has to offer, a choice impossible of accomplishment in his, or in our own strength. Why, brethren and sisters, why? That is the question I want for us to think through this afternoon hour—why?"

I looked along the row at Laurence, and he must have sensed

me or something, for he turned his head and (so help me) winked, solemn as you like, Joan saw there was something going on and shared a smile out to one and all, the kids shifted, whispered . . . and that was the golden bowl broken at the reading-desk, clatter clatter.

Not that he lost his touch or anything, he still flowed over stony ways, brimming, easy, never at a loss for several words, any words, but that I'd heard the like before more times than was good for a man in my need of charity . . . and I slid down back into the comfortable slump I'd been in, and let the wind and the river run on (glasses off), toward the south, unto the north, into the sea, round by the Cape of Good Hope and back again, my ear filled with hearing . . .

"You all right?" whispered Joan.

I nodded and put my finger to my lips, we settled the kids with more sweets and looks as good as thick ears, and let the meeting go on happening . . . by which time Fenton Miller Gould was well away with a lead of twenty lengths (and this smile he had was just not knowing what else to do with his mouth between times), and Laurence had given the programme to Anna (who began to look at it with our Kath, so I slipped them a Biro to draw with in the blank spaces) and was himself back with Africa, as good a place as any except that I hadn't had two years inside staring at a wall—so I licensed my roving eye further afield, east to India and China, west to North and South America, Newfoundland and all, there being several good-looking girls in the Chorale, wide-eyed, clean and clear, not that many of them were all that enthralled by the flow the air-conditioning was wordy with . . . several searching our faces for loved ones, three or four sitting together on the left chewing sweets or something, extremely slowly to be undetected, every so often the movements of their jaws synchronizing, altogether now, and then losing rhythm, each back to her own speed . . . the youths as bad, tie-touching, nail-examining, their own eyes licensed . . . Wesley Garland continually testing his first sproutings of moustache against his lower lip, Mr. Stone too old a hand to give the boredom away, head cocked on one side as in his photograph, hands judiciously poised, fingers together, been doing this sort of thing for years, no bother . . . the organist fiddling with his sheet music on the quiet, Mrs. Moss still with it in front of us, but Mr. Moss nodding off every once in a while . . . and I wished we'd sat further back, have more people to watch, greatest

show on earth . . . and still Fenton Miller Gould flowed (glasses back on now) . . .

" . . . the grace of our Lord and Saviour, Christ Jesus, amply filled his experience, pressed down and running over. The infirmities of age, which indeed visit with us all, did nothing to dampen the ardour of his spirits. His was the victory, he did not lose out. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year he carried on in that lonely, isolated jungle fastness, living and mingling with primitive savages not far removed culture-wise from the Stone Age in terms of dress, custom, barbarism . . ."

This time the pause was significant enough for a revelation as gold-plugged as his back teeth—and I saw that Mr. Stone was relieved that the pun on his name had been let drop unremarked.

" . . . in an Africa rapidly submerging beneath the tidal-wave of a new, a far more terrible barbarism—the barbarism of a cynical, sinful, secularized, half-educated minority of rabble-rousers, Communist-inspired agents . . ."

My prejudice was too much for me at this, and I slid down lower into slump and looked at him "real good", taken to waving his Bible about now between stabs at us with his glasses, couldn't see what he wanted with them, seemed to be able to manage either with or without, looked older with, younger without, which was a clue . . . Laurence a continent away, Joan embarrassed for my sake (at least she was shifting about uncomfortably, though it could just have been the other), the girls in the Chorale out of sweets, Mr. Stone just that tensed bit more bothered . . . and still Fenton Miller Gould flowed, the Cape of Good Hope seemingly as far away as ever . . .

" . . . barbarism—Why! the women daub their hair, their crowning glory, with filthy mud from the river and mould it into shapes ridiculous to behold, which the sun bakes like very bricks in the name of beauty!"

Which was good for a laugh, and got one, and I thought of the girl with violet hair on the train—at least mud was free, which was more than you could say for what she was kidded into needing . . .

"Barbarism!" he declaimed (the only word) when he'd judged the laughter to be on its last knockings, "barbarism . . ."

. . . and time, clockless, sagged from the now like cold treacle . . . all I hoped was that there would be no remembrance of words

which were to come with those which would undoubtedly come after.

AND MORE TIME MUST HAVE PASSED, THE WORDS UNDOUBTEDLY CAME . . . but then, again in mid-ripple, he seemed to run out of notes, and stopped, and took off his glasses, two three, and made us wait for it . . . nine, ten, and I sat back up, this being it.

"There remains but little for me to add," he said, and you could see people taking a new lease on their Christianity, the old having expired a time and a half ago, Mr. Moss sat up as though Mrs. Moss had nudged him, Mr. Stone uncrossed his legs . . .

"We have now followed through the Christian experience of this beacon light to our generation, whose fame is so firmly founded in achievements in so many areas of human experience, whose advent into this troubled old world of ours has helped countless thousands to come to grips, come to terms with reality, to take a firm grasp on those limitless powers of spiritual refreshing which were granted unto him in rich measure to make free of unto others—this light in the gathering dark of materialism, which like that other, greater Light, whose source he acknowledged as the True Light, came to guide us into our eternal home . . ." The pause was long as he stared into our faces (glasses off), nine, ten (and *was* he staring at Laurence?) . . . "Amen."

AND EVERYBODY SEEMED TO COUGH, THE CHORALE TOOK UP THE vision where it had been left hanging, Mr. Stone got about that much off his chair . . . and then Fenton Miller Gould was away again in second wind.

"There remains but these two things for me now to do, both of which give me infinite joy and pleasure . . ." And he waved his Bible aloft for the umpteenth time. "On behalf of the General Assembly of our World-Wide Denomination it is my great privilege to present this Bible . . ." He suddenly brought it down from on high and held it in both hands like a fragile thing above price. "This Bible which once belonged to Dr. Janek himself, which was found on his body after his death, and which is stained . . . stained with his martyr's blood . . ."

You could hear the whispering excitement, and I looked at Laurence—and it was as though he had been slapped in the face, shaking his head in disbelief . . .

"My great privilege to present this Bible to our Brother Stone . . ."

Who rose and stepped round promptly to receive, all eyes on the one thing.

"Your President, to accept on your behalf to be kept in some suitable place as a memorial to the great man whose most precious possession, whilst yet he lived, it once was."

Brotherly hands held brotherly shoulders for a brief moment again, the relic passed from President to President, Mr. Stone said something we none of us could hear, and then stood there holding it as though not worthy . . . Laurence had his eyes closed . . . and Fenton Miller Gould turned to us, and moved sideways to the shrouded plinth.

"And now . . ." And then (so help me), as he fumbled for the draw-string the organ swirled distantly into something which can only have been a drifting memory of the *Trumpet Voluntary* as played by a Sunday cinema organist—all we needed were coloured lights mixing to purple . . . and this draw-string was apparently hard to find among the folds of cloth, and Mr. Stone moved as though to help—but no, there it was.

"And now . . ."

The first time he pulled it nothing much happened. His smile held, sincere and adjusted, but most people seemed not to have noticed anyway, one or two anonymous faces grinning here and there at the back of the Choral, that was all. He pulled again, harder, but the sheet was only tightening, and the plinth wasn't that secure, wasn't meant to be, it was obviously the wrong string—and yes, Fenton Miller Gould had seen it for himself, and exchanged strings as though he had merely been testing the arrangements for thoroughness . . . and pulled again.

This time the sheet loosened, slipped from the bronze, and then, after one snag on the head of a drawing-pin, slid away down to bend and break the stems of the nearest Floral Arrangements beneath.

"Brethren and sisters," he began, but yards from the microphone, his voice lost . . . so sideways back he came to the rehearsed distance. "Brethren and sisters, I give you Dr. Stefan Janek, in whose honour we have been here met and assembled this afternoon hour . . ." And, as the organ shrilled into a louder repeat according to the other arrangements, he composed himself into profile for the photographers who had risen from nowhere to

crouch this side of the moat behind the pot-plants . . . chin raised in humble pride, and yet responsive to the latent challenge of his personal vision or something . . . his right arm dramatically out-flung, his left hand still holding the string, both thus leading with proper dignity (past Mr. Stone where he stood) to the head at last unveiled, flash flash.

NOT THAT IT WAS MUCH OF A LIKENESS, THE SORT OF THING YOU can see in Town Halls and Municipal Art Galleries . . . *Alderman Harold Anderson: Raised by Public Subscription* . . . though the artist, whoever he was, had caught the drooping lower lip and the way Janek seemed to hood his eyes—he'd even managed to suggest the scar, the merest smoothness of texture across the left cheek—but it was all just that bit too clean-cut, too young, like the Denominational Jesus.

But, whatever, there it was, and still the bulbs popped and flashed, new angles, new poses, the photographers up on the platform now for close-ups—the head, the Bible, the Presidents, us . . . and I glanced for Laurence . . . but he'd gone, Anna still with ours, but his seat empty.

I looked round, and there he was, three-quarters back up the aisle on his obvious way out . . . which ought, by rights, to have been a proper grand opera exit, all eyes turning, bang bang, the lot—but nobody took a blind bit of notice, the organ on a third repeat, the ceremony unfolding as per its attributed success or something . . . just the bronze sockets of Janek, eyeless after him: which is the way of these things, the big decisions never being that big at the time.

"Better stick with him," said Joan, "you never know."

I needed no telling . . . the doors swinging behind him.

"See you at the bike if we miss you," and pushed past the kids to avoid spoiling their drawing, Joan saying something to Mrs. Moss, noticed an elderly woman going round the back on her way out, and followed a bit lively—though people noticed me right enough, being the third, and with the Choral Item yet to come and all. At the door I gave myself the satisfaction of looking back at what was still going on—and Mr. Stone hadn't missed our going.

NEITHER HAD THE YOUTH ON DUTY AT THE DOOR MISSED MY COMING, for, as he must have done for Laurence and the elderly woman, he held it open, smiling.

"Thank you," I said.

"You're welcome," he said.

And Laurance was by the glass doors, intense and pale, and the elderly woman was holding his hands in hers, black coat on, old-fashioned hat, big skewering hat-pins, and I hesitated . . .

"Not only blasphemous" he was saying, "but totally untrue."

"Don't be concerning yourself, Laurie," she said, Irish if ever was, and Dublin at that, "it won't be doing an ounce of good to yourself nor the dead."

And he'd seen me, probably reflected in the glass, and turned—and it broke you to see him, the agony and loneliness and the longing of him, lost and seeking . . . and the relief in his face made me feel my cup of cold water hadn't been wasted . . . and he released his hands as though glad to, and she also turned, seen her somewhere before, something about her eyes, smiling, and he invited me over with his free hands, almost beseeching.

"I'm sorry," he said as I got close enough, "I couldn't stand it any more."

"You couldn't have been higher up the wall than I was," I said. "Though it was one of the umpteen relics of the True Cross they had there."

The woman laughed, the way an ex-Catholic would, free enough to laugh, but the old drag still strong . . . and Laurence smiled, which was something.

"Please allow me to introduce Mrs. Lucas," he said . . . and that was it, the wife of Pastor Terence Lucas, of course, those eyes—and she smiled, and we both said the usual words, only not so many as usual as we both had him in mind, shook hands, and hers were warm . . . and he put his arm round her shoulders, probably embarrassed to have been seen holding hands before. "I owe such a great deal to her and her . . ."

"Get on with you," she said, "breathe a word and I'll . . . I'll . . ."

"You'll do what?" he said, laughing—and she obviously had the knack, could do with handing on a few tips to Margaret, liked her at once, looked a good sort, and we exchanged a few more of the usual words, this and that, and what a change had come over London since the end of the war . . . and then, bang bang, the Chorale started on its Item inside the Hall, sounded Handelian, though the words were a mystery—so there wasn't that much time before we'd be swamped, the moments lost.

"What do you make of all that in there?" I said to her.

He didn't give her a chance to get an answer in edgeways. "Blasphemous, totally untrue—does less than justice to the man and none to the truth."

"Laurie, Laurie," she said, "don't be concerning yourself—what good can it do?"

"Truth is truth," he said, and then, bitterly, "even the whole world around."

"They'll have their day," she said. "Time will be seeing to truth."

"Not if those who know it don't speak it," he said.

She smiled, fondly the only word. "You're worse than Terence."

Which seemed to slow him down, though I preferred the galloping man. "What would he have done, Mrs. Lucas?" he said.

She took his hand in hers again, and he let be. "You're your own man, Laurie, no need of the dead."

And they let it go, embarrassed and embarrassing . . . the Chorale was swamping even the organ, there were little peering eyes about if you'd have cared to look for them, and it was one of those timeless moments when the past and the present flux into one.

But she gave a sudden squeeze and a pat and then let go his hand.

"One thing I will say," she said. "I'm still on the Finance Committee, and I've been nursing your unpaid account these two years. I won't say there haven't been moves to have it written off, and some have dropped hints big as dray-horses' hooves that I should be standing down, for a younger person, but, with God willing, I'll see that account paid before I'll join Terence." She smiled to me. "Would you think me seventy-eight?"

"Not a day over sixty."

"Get on with you," she said, knowing to be flattered and liking it.

"You know I'm off the books?" he said.

"You served God two years before a word was raised against you, and if those two in there are worthy—well!" She smiled again, and you could see her husband. "Though not a penny-piece will you get on my say for these last years idle, my lad!"

And these two had a relationship.

"I won't deny Margaret and I need the money, but don't, er . . ."

"We meet this Wednesday fortnight," she said. "Can you manage a crust that long? or have I to see what can . . ."

He included me without letting on. "It's kind of you to offer, but I even have access to some home-made blackcurrant jam."

She laughed. "It had better not be sweet as mine!" And we all laughed—only to have her go serious all of a sudden. "It's not just for your sake, Laurie—there are things needing to be right for God's sake."

"Amen," he said, and looked to be his own man.

ANYWAY, WE STOOD THERE FOR A BIT TALKING ABOUT TWO THINGS and another, especially what was coming over the Denomination, but avoiding what we were all three thinking—though, again, I suppose our reasons were different . . . the Chorale still at it, though it couldn't be for many breaths longer, even Handel had to end . . . questions, answers, smiles, remembrance—this, that, the other, all these; but the greatest being whatever you cared to name it.

AND THEN THAT LAST BREATH CAME, THE CHORALE ENDED FOR THE organ to clinch—prayer was now being offered according to the Printed Arrangements . . . and we gave over and let be; easy enough now with one another not to have to make a fuss with the face during the silence, though she did adjust her hat-pins while she had the chance, Laurence smiling—he'd learn, a month married and he'd know women were all of a piece, the home their synagogue; yea, in their hands the bread as well as the mirror.

Then the meeting got going again round the last bend into the home straight, the organ shuddering the floor even where we were: *O Praise Ye The Lord!* no. 351 in the book, and Laurence shewed signs of wanting to be out of the doors and up the steps, but she obviously had something else in mind.

"Can I come to your wedding, Laurie?" she said. "Where's it at?"

So there we were, back with this and that and Croydon Registry Office on the 27th of the month, he was blushing like sixteen, she was coddling him and winking at me and had him managed in no time without him feeling a thing . . . "Fifty-seven years married, and you'll know a trick or two worth knowing" . . . but every so often she glanced at the inner doors, and I suddenly tumbled that it was the RECESSIONAL she had in mind, and moved quietly out of the way to give her confrontation room . . . All things that give sound went on giving it, especially the organ, *All*

ages along, bang bang . . . and then the inner doors opened in readiness on the great *Amen*, and we had this sight down the broad way of dark blue Wilton carpet to where Mr. Stone stood with his holy arm raised in the Benediction, Fenton Miller Gould to his left, head bowed, the bronze sockets of Janek to his right, eyeless at us . . . and Laurence stood his ground even though you could tell he knew he'd been manœuvred.

“ . . . and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

MUST HAVE BEEN A BIT OF A SHOCK FOR THE PAIR OF THEM TO HAVE opened their eyes and seen us, but they were both too old at the game to let on; and as the organ drifted into another yard and a half of electronic reverence they came down the steps on either side of the platform, gravely, soberly, with all longsuffering and endurance, to join again in brotherhood where the organ squatted, the Chorale remaining in place, the congregation still standing, both of a good report of them which are without (wasn't he interviewed for the papers?), holding all in pure conscience, and so up towards us, here a small smile, there a discreet nod, everywhere charity abiding, Mr. Stone with the relic, Fenton Miller Gould empty-handed now and seeming to lag behind just that step (glasses on), the down-sitting wave flowing up behind them like a wake as they passed between the rows . . .

“Couldn't do better in St. Peter's itself,” said Mrs. Lucas, and we smiled, closer together, Laurence in the middle . . .

And then they were only steps from the doors, couldn't be off looking at us, and Mr. Stone chose me, the weakest vessel, and I smiled back—his call, and me with Ace, King, Queen, Jack, ten, and in trumps at that . . . through the few ushers on the inside, and then out, five yards between us.

“What a very great pity you weren't able to be here for the Ceremony, Brother,” he said to me, then switched to Mrs. Lucas on the same breath, “Good afternoon, Sister, please don't let us interrupt your conversation,” and made to shepherd Fenton Miller Gould out of harm's way across to the right someplace, any place.

“I believe you both know Dr. Kinman,” she said with not so much as the twitch of a smile, and them defenceless, dickering in their steps, the ushers missing nothing, the first out-comers already in the aisle—and Laurence had it in him to incline his head as gravely as they did, though you could tell what a state he was in by the way his fingers twisted together behind his back. And then,

as innocent as you like, she said, "To change the subject, Brother Stone, Wednesday fortnight the Finance Committee?"

He knew. "Yes indeed, Sister," he said, "ten o'clock here, in the main committee room . . . And now, if you'll excuse us please, Brother Gould has a tight schedule . . ."

"Surely," she said. "Until then."

And everybody went through the motions of a smile, except that hers and mine were real, and he continued his shepherding across to the right, through the first of the people coming out, and round the back someplace—both looking dead worried, Fenton Miller Gould doing the talking.

SHE WAS, OF COURSE, DELIGHTED—NOT THAT WE HAD MUCH MORE chance to pass the time of day because the first few became the lot (three or four looking at Laurence a bit old-fashioned), most people knew her, "Hello, Sister Lucas, thrilling meeting," but she managed to kiss him.

"Now mind you come out to see me this next week, Laurie, and bring Margaret, else I'll . . . well . . ."

"Do what?" he said, but he was obviously ten yards nearer tears than laughter.

"Never you mind," she said, "you just be coming—you know the way."

He turned for the doors and the steps, and she held my arm to stay, and gave him time to get from hearing.

"Thank you for his blackcurrant jam—God will bless you, Brother."

"You just get his money," I said, "and we might even manage you a pot."

"Get on with you," she said, and (so help me) kissed me too, an old woman's kiss, dry and sweet as pressed rose petals in a prayer-book, and then turned to the people knowing her, chatter chatter, reaching forth her hands.

I CAUGHT HIM UP AT THE CORNER, THOUGH HE WAS WAITING FOR me, and we walked on over the road into the trees of the square to be out of the way.

"Quite a woman," I said when I thought he could stand it.

"She and her husband paid my way through medical school—their only son was killed in France in nineteen-eighteen."

"That the debt of gratitude?"

"Partly . . . they also, you might say, planted the first seed of my wanting to go out to Africa at all." He smiled at some joke of his own. "Such a thing has never happened in our family." Sounded like a quotation.

We came to the first bench and sat down—during the week you couldn't have moved for people like me, but, being Sunday, the place was left to the pigeons, just the faraway noise of traffic to remind you that the Euston Road wasn't five minutes through the back-doubles. The sun was quite warm in patches, the grass Constable and lawn-mower ads, the flowers bright as need be, and even the office blocks somehow beautiful because empty and at uncommercial rest.

"I like your little girl," I said. "We must have her over sometime."

"Please forgive me—I intended to tell you, but somehow—well . . ."

"Happens with me all the time . . . Sturdy kid though—couldn't take ~~for~~ for anything less than Slavic, could you?"

He smiled, gently. "It's good of you to suggest the point—you wouldn't be the first to hint at my paternity."

I thought of protesting the thought, but he wasn't that much of a fool. "Like for instance?"

"Does it matter?"

"Barbara seemed to get quite excited about being your sister-in-law—~~she~~ she one?"

"Strange girl," he said . . . and that was as far as he'd let himself be tapped, seemed to be elsewhere. And so we just sat, heard cars drawing away, footsteps. "Although she's had the disadvantage of being brought up under not quite ideal circumstances."

"Barbara or Anna?"

He laughed as he stood up. "I was thinking of Anna . . . But, er, hadn't we better perhaps think of getting back? I wouldn't want us to be late twice in one day."

"Can't risk that," I said, "peace at any price," and I upped and we strolled back into sight of the main entrance, fewer cars parked now, but the pavements crowded with talking people, clusters and couples, nineteen to the dozen. "Did you have much trouble getting her into the country?"

"A little, but there were ways and means . . . the American was on his way through on a posting, and was never traced—and what was another life more or less in Germany at that time?"

WHICH WAS ANOTHER ONE DIDN'T NEED ANSWERING, AND WE CROSSED the road into the crowd, nobody taking much notice either way, and found where we'd parked—but no signs of our nearest and dearest. The great big American car had gone, so we had plenty of elbow-room, and I began to fish our removables and things from the sidecar.

"Seems to have been an accident to your rear-light," he said. "Looks like it's had a knock."

I looked, and the whole number-plate and light fixture was hanging loose, the wiring torn out, the red plastic cracked.

"That American car," I said, "sure as little apples," though if he hadn't been there I'd have sworn.

"Fortunately," he said, "we don't have to be out late enough to need lights."

"Else," I said, "we would be scuppered—never get a bulb on Sunday."

"Don't you carry spares?"

"Only when I think of it."

He laughed. "You'd never last ten minutes in the Missions—spares and improvisation, the alpha and omega . . . I've used a stethoscope-tube as a petrol pipe for twenty miles when one sprang a leak, then taken it off to listen to a suspected case of bronchial pneumonia, and then driven the patient back to Yumbala with it as a petrol pipe again."

"Better get improvising on that then," I said, and so back, easy as you like, to this and that, the inessentials—but even though he looked to have forgotten his beginnings of a blast earlier on you could tell it still had him edgy. All he needed was time enough—which I gave him.

ANYWAY, WE DID WHAT WE COULD WITH THE LIGHT, TIED STRING round the plate to hold it up, Laurence deft and handy, and then began to get our things on.

"Running late," I said. "Must be having a good old chinwag—might go and have a scout round in a minute."

But we were saved the bother, because the kids, Anna and all, came skipping round the corner, holding hands in a chain.

"We're going to tea with Mrs. Moss," they called from twenty, thirty yards, "and Mummy said we had to find you and bring you, and Anna's going to shew us all her things and she's got a real Polish doll."

And away back they hared, us in tow, one each end—and Anna gave him the Programme she was holding to mind in his pocket, and held his hand, just that bit more excited, her pony-tail flicking as she looked from face to face, eyes wide like it was Christmas or birthday . . .

(Then I remembered the day of her birth.)

"May they stay, Daddy?" he said, "may they? *please.*"

"We'll have to ask their mother," he said, "but I think . . ."

"Let's!" shouted ours, and away they went, Anna hesitant until he patted her bottom to run—and then away she went after them.

"Huray up!" they shouted, "last one's a monkey!"

There were tears in his eyes, and I didn't push what luck there was.

HE HAD IT BEATEN BY THE TIME WE'D FOUND THEM ACROSS THE road from the entrance, Mr. and Mrs. Moss doing their best to understand what was being said by all four at once, and Joan already sitting in the back of a well-kept pre-war Standard saloon . . .

"It's all done and settled with," said Mrs. Moss to us, "you're all coming to tea—Laurence and Margaret were anyway, and Anna will so enjoy the children, and it won't make all that much difference, we can seat you quite easily, can't we, dear?"

"Indeed yes," said Mr. Moss, "we have rather tended to drop into somewhat of a rut these—these last . . ."

And she nudged him again before he could get it out, but everybody knew, and Laurence smiled.

"Two years?" he said, gently as you like, and we sailed into calmer waters, with a fair wind to tare forward at something.

I poked in at the window to Joan . . .

"I'm that tired," she said, "it'll be such a relief."

. . . and the kids piled in the back with her and she straightened them and shut them up by well-known methods . . .

"You can follow the car," said Mr. Moss, "it's a pretty direct run."

"Laurence knows the house if we lose you," I said.

"See you there then," said Mrs. Moss.

. . . and so away they went, the kids waving like mad, Mrs. Moss plump and smiling, Mr. Moss driving carefully, backing out into the road like it was chess he was playing, knight's move . . . and round the corner.

"Come on then," I said, "we'll have us a quiet run through Hyde Park on the way and go over by Chelsea Bridge—probably get there just as soon."

We walked back to the bike, lot of people still about, the doors to the Hall shut now, ushers busying about inside . . .

"No mention of Barbara," I said.

"I believe there's an Evangelistic Meeting at Brixton tonight," he said. "She helps at those . . ." He hesitated. "And then she doesn't get on any too well with her mother." And went on before I could take it up. "One thing—don't make it too late going home, Joan looks extremely tired, and she needs her sleep."

"As a doctor?"

"As a friend," he said.

AND THAT WAS ONE OF THE MOMENTS, THE BIKE STARTED SECOND time of kicking, and away we chugged, rattling a bit, bang clatter, round the corner, through the back-doubles into the Euston Road, and so through Bloomsbury, along Oxford Street to Marble Arch . . . and there, of course, were the crowds at Speakers' Corner.

I slowed down and tucked in behind a sight-seeing Fiat, and so left into the Park.

"Care for an amble here?" I called over my shoulder.

"If you like," he said, "never been before."

So I pulled in at the nearest parking space along the North Carriage Road, and, dangling our helmets by their straps, we walked back towards the restless crowd, all (who could doubt?) after some new thing or other.

"Gluttons for it," I said, "that's what we are—most people would be satisfied with a basinful of Fenton Miller Gould."

But he wouldn't bite. "Strange thing, never having been here before—is it always as well attended as this?"

So I told him all about it, and we mingled . . . men, women, children, youths, boys, girls, Salvation Army lasses, husbands, wives, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters by birth, in law, before God, and by faith; friends merely together, sweethearts hand-in-hand, lovers arm-in-arm, soldiers in great big boots, coppers on the move, tarts on the game, tourists with cameras, parents with push-chairs (even a pram), lone wolves, lame dogs, strays, spares, couples, packs, sinners, the Saved, the Elect, the Socialist Party of Great Britain and most shades of pink to Communist, most degrees of freedom to Anarchist, most shapes and

sizes of most other things and conditions, especially people, the people, yes; tall, thin, short, fat, clean, dirty, shaved and bearded, walking and still, laughing and heckling, normal and celibate, shouting and singing, preaching and praying and cursing all and sundry, each and every, now and always, haves and haven'ts, rich man (Tory), beggar man (tramp), this man, that man, all men, quite a lot of coloured men (grey, black, brown, yellow, and most mixtures), more men, amen, one man and his dog, One God and His Son, Who *came unto His own* (Pharisee, Sadducee, Essene, Herodian, Zealot, Nazarite, Proselyte, Samaritan, and assorted Gentile), *and His own* (Anglican, Methodist, Calvinist, Lutheran, and Primitive,*Regular, Separate, United, Free Will, Duck River, Seventh-Day, and General Six-Principle Baptist; Armenian, Moravian, Mennonite, and Brethren, Open, Closed, and Plymouth; Presbyterian, Petecostal, Roman Catholic, Greek and Russian Orthodox, Evangelical, Four-Square Gospel, Kodesh Immanuel, House of David, Pillar of Fire, Shepherd's Rod, and Apostolic Overcoming Holy Church of God, to name a few: Daniel's Band, Flying Roll, Saints of Christ, Saints of God, both Latter-Day and Strangite, Christ Scientist, Christian Spiritualist, Christadelphian, Jehovah's Witness, Seventh-Day Adventist, and The Dolley Pond Church of God with Signs Following, to name a few more), *His own received Him not*, not then, not now, not ever by the look and sound of things that day, that Lord's Day as we mingled.

"What do you make of it?" I said.

"It's difficult to know what good they believe they're doing—the place is more like a circus than anything else."

"And the Vandals at the gates."

He smiled. "That's what you said yesterday—though large numbers of Christians *did* witness at the old Roman circuses."

"These aren't witnesses," I said, "they're missionaries."

Which caught him on the wrong foot. "Misionaries? that how it really strikes you?"

"All things to all men in all directions at once."

He had a look round, weighing some of it up, and smiled. "There do indeed seem to be many mansions in the Father's house."

Which caught *me* on the wrong foot. "Yumbala market—same people, different colour . . . but you come and listen to the *Coloured Workers League* having a go at you lot."

And we moved through some more of the crowd . . .

"I'm not saying I don't agree with you," he said, "there are some grave reservations about the value of traditional Missionary activity."

. . . back towards where I'd noticed them, excuse me . . .

"You wait till you've listened to these," I said, "wouldn't do Fenton much harm either."

. . . past the London Scot who leads off something alarming about women, big guffaw going on at some remark . . . and then the first of the big crowd, lot of West Indians, few white girls dolled-up, some nasty-looking youths in imitation-leather jackets, pimples and wrinkle-pickers, and this high platform, bit tottery, COLOURED WORKERS LEAGUE on a board in poor lettering, white on institution green.

"These are the boys," I said, "the inheritors."

There was a young negro up having a real go, tribal marks ridging his cheeks, beautiful teeth, tongue and gums surprisingly pale, light-brown suit went well with his skin, slurring his words but loud enough for it not to matter, making his points with what is known at Clarence House as "deplorable lack of restraint", narrow red tie on a cream shirt, must have been earning good money at something or other, palms of his hands more yellow than you'd expect, naked and vulnerable, every so often snarling his face, smacking the board, crack like a whip, obviously answering some question about conditions in the Kimberley diamond mines . . .

"Doesn't look to me as though he's worked with his hands for years," said Laurence, noticed it too, "I wonder how he knows so much about mining?"

"Why don't you ask him?"

Which seemed a possibility, and he had another look up at the negro . . . quite high against the trees, black, brown, and green, rambling on and on, angry, obviously not without cause (Johannesburg, Sharpeville, Hola, Mulumbi), but hating our guts and had us feeling as sweet on him—which is one of the difficulties with such: treat them as men and brethren, rough with the smooth, like or dislike *as* men and brethren, any day, any shade, and they call "colour" quicker than your Boer farmer coming out of the barn. Smooth, and it's all right, they might even try coming the old acid themselves—but you just give as good as you get like you would with anybody else, and it's colour-prejudice. Some of them, anyway.

Not, of course, that it isn't up to us and all that—we have to love them these days to at least make something up for what happened to them in the old days, but we can still pick and choose which ones we *like*.

This, one, for example, banging away—for all the good he thought he was doing . . .

"Whatever are you thinking?" said Laurence. "If you could only see your face."

Which was me on the wrong foot again, a cover-up needed. "Wonder if he gets as vehement about missions as mining?"

"Why don't you ask him?" he said, never batted an eyelid.

"You've got yourself a question," I said, and began to watch for an opening . . . a smack on the board, then the right fist punching at us . . .

"... flood! deep flood sweep white imperialism into sea! no more blacks run for work in mine, 'yes baas, no baas,' dig gold for Stock Exchange, that reason, that *one* reason white man in Africa! *one* reason, one white reason . . ." Smack on the board. "Gold! diamond! copper! LOOT! no love for blacks, LOOT! blacks work for LOOT! that *all*! Plenty servant run for white man in Africa, they no afford servant this country—why!" Another smack. "Blacks cheap in Africa, like slave. Well I tell you, slave free! blacks no slave much longer, day for white imperialism in Africa over! over! Get out!" Smack. "Get out white man! out!"

One fast smack that round, and he stopped to wipe his mouth with an already crumpled handkerchief, his eyes looking round at the crowds beyond.

"What about Christian missions?" I shouted before anyone else could think of anything.

He turned swiftly, and sorted me out, pounce. "What that one?"

"What about Christian missions? what do you think about them?"

He smacked the board, crack! before he'd even started, so it was obviously a matter of blue fuse-paper and retiring immediately—and Laurence looked like he'd seen and heard such many a time, troubled, and yet compassionate.

"Missions! What I think about missions?" He turned his head to an empty space ten feet below and spat, though more symbolically than with spit. "*That* what I think about missions! *That* what Africa think about missions!" And he spat again, his face contorted.

"Why?" I said, loudly enough to make sure he didn't pass on elsewhere.

"WHY?" he shouted, though more of a scream than a shout—and it was a loving good job he hadn't got an *assagai* handy, just punched his right fist at us. "Why? What you know what missions done in Africa? 'Close eyes, pray to Jesus' . . ." His voice smarmy ". . . that what they say to blacks, 'Close eyes, pray to Jesus,' bloody-fool blacks close eyes, 'yes baas.' Along come white trader, big cigar, *big* Churchill cigar . . ." He puffed at an imaginary one, mouth sneering ". . . see bloody-fool blacks all close eyes, put hand down in they pocket, steal they bloody money, quick!"

There was laughter in the crowd, some at the story, some at his act, some against me, some just laughter—and it encouraged him.

"Missions!" he shouted. "What Africa want missions for? What this Jesus done for *you*?" Smack. "War? Atom-bomb? That what Jesus done for you? Missions say 'black savages, we bring lovely Jesus' . . ." Smarmy again, his hands folded in the attitude of prayer—then suddenly, bang, smack, zooming like dive-bombers. "Well I tell you, Africa don't want *white* savages, war, atom-bomb—that what Jesus done for *you*, you keep it!" He stopped to wipe his mouth again, obviously with plenty yet to say. "Missions! They all got different Jesus—this Jesus, that Jesus, *which* Jesus? They all fight . . ." Smack. "Fight worse than blacks *which* Jesus *the* right Jesus! Missions, they come in Africa, big house, big car, plenty servant, they don't come live in blacks, not work down mine." Smack. "You see missions go belly empty? no big suit? no money in pocket? 'Do what white baas tell you do,' that what they tell bloody-fool blacks, they don't do what blacks got do, down mine!" He punched downwards, down. "That place for missions, down *there*!"

Which was enough for more laughter . . . only, suddenly, across and above it, loudly, and yet with this compassion, Laurence was speaking: except that I couldn't understand a word, obviously some native language, slowly as though having to think about it, but with power and conviction, his own man once and for all . . . and it had the young negro knocked sideways on, his hands clenched, others among them listening, people shoving to see . . . and then Laurence ended, obviously on a question, and stood waiting, politely.

Then other voices raised all round, some in English, some not, some at Laurence, some at the negro up there—and he'd let his

grip slacken, apparently at a loss for something to answer with, no longer dominating, ten feet tall above us, but exposed, pilloried.

"What was that lot about?" shouted a man the other side of the crowd, "Father Christmas?"

"Marilyn Monroe!" shouted someone else.

The negro raised his arms wide . . .

"Goal!" shouted someone right in my ear.

"Friends!" shouted the negro, "friends!"

"Answer the man," said a West Indian in front of the platform.

"Up the Spurs!"

"Goal!" shouted most of the crowd, "Foul!" shouted most of the rest, and I knew the signs.

"Come on," I said to Laurence, "we'll skate off out of this."

"He hasn't answered my question."

"Friends!" the negro was shouting, "time now for next speaker, Secretary Coloured Workers League, Mr. Daniel Isanusi."

Who was already taking his place, small man, words of peace no doubt anxious on his lips.

"Think you're likely to get one?" I said. "Come on, while the going's good enough."

And I took his arm and brought him out from among them, several saying things to him as we eased by, not in English, couple swearing us off in Anglo-Saxon, other people looking at us curiously, Laurence reluctant but persuaded . . . and so back to the safe fringes in sight of the coppers, though you could still see the young negro leading off to a splinter group behind the platform, Mr. Daniel Isanusi doing his best, and a big shambling character more like Black Chaka than anything else giving us the old two-finger salute cheerfully (though sooner than that he looked capable of) . . . which made me hope that Phil Henderson, the Roughest and Toughest Mat-Man at Work Today, had done a good job.

"So much for our black brothers," I said.

AND WE HEADED BACK ALONG THROUGH THE FRINGE UP TOWARDS the bike, until far enough to be easy—when I had to know.

"What on earth did you ask him? And was that Swahili?"

"A bit rusty, but I merely asked him where he went to school as a boy and what he did when he was wanting a doctor?"

"Implying it would have had to have been at a mission?"

"There are few enough schools in the rural areas of any other

kind, except those taken over by the government for one reason or another, and I would say that until very recently most white doctors were missionaries—there are some native doctors, but most of them prefer to work for the various mining and industrial companies in the towns, where pay and conditions are so much better.”

“Why did you ask in Swahili?” I said. “Swank?”

He smiled. “Thought you’d get round to that . . . Yes, partly, just to remind him he couldn’t have it all his own way, but also to keep the matter between our two selves, not to bring possible shame on him.”

I had to laugh at him, so serious, not that he didn’t mean it enough for eloquence. “No,” he said, “they are a proud people with much to be proud of, and we do well to remember it. Some of them are aware of an ancient past, lost empires, vanished cities. In fact . . .” He paused, as though weighing up whether or not to come out with whatever it was. “Actually, he rather reminded me of Kumali in some ways . . .”

“The League must have lost a good man,” I said—and wished at once I hadn’t.

“How can you know the heart of a man?” he said, suddenly too miserable to be as angry as he had room for, and I let it go, time enough . . . and we eased on, excuse me . . . past and through some more of the free democratic circus: clowns, preachers, propagandists, cranks, crackpots, queers . . .

UNTIL, SUDDENLY (AND SO HELP ME), THERE, RIGHT AT THE END under the trees between us and the bike, standing on a park-chair, and so chest and shoulders higher than his little group of acolytes, subdeacons, and deacons, was (who can doubt?) JF in what must have been full voice, it carrying sound if not sense even at the distance we were at . . . not many free moral agents listening, but JF as ever was: and I was glad to have at least been right about where he’d got some of his voice from.

WHICH, OF COURSE, WITH HOME-MADE BANNERS ON HANDY LENGTHS of two-by-two in the Friday morning of the mind, was a problem—not for my own six feet of comfort, but on account Laurence had stood about enough as my conscience could stand. It seemed too good a chance to miss, but I just didn’t know.

“Come on,” I said, “let’s walk round on the grass for a change.”

So we strolled down a side-path between the railings, fewer people though still a lot, and on to the thin grass, couples lying about, deckchairs, sheets of Sunday newspaper, orange-peel, apple-cores, but the earth living beneath the feet . . . round behind the restlessness on our right, Marble Arch and the ODEON as a background, the Park stretching to the Serpentine on our left, distant trees, new buildings rising, an aircraft whining over to London Airport . . .

"Tell me," I said, "why didn't you fly when you went, instead of going round by ship?"

"Cheaper," he said, "and as it wasn't my money, but that of sacrificial members, it seemed to me to be important." He smiled. "I noticed that Brother Gould held it against me."

"Great flying man, Brother Gould."

"Seems a pity, to go to sleep in London and wake up a continent away—the body has very little time to acclimatize, and the mind none. Besides . . ." and he smiled, "on the voyage I was able to improve my hastily acquired Swahili."

"Thereby being enabled to adjust to new language requirements soonest," I said, and we laughed and kept strolling on, me with half an eye cocked in the general direction of where JF would be if we could have seen him for the people . . .

"The surprising thing is," he said, "how very few of our workers out there ever take the trouble to learn more than kitchen-Kaffir—the minimum you need to get by on to run a household, quite apart from Swahili or any of the native languages . . . and as for being able to preach, Janek never would, said he was too old to start, always used an interpreter, and Brother Gould certainly never did to the best of my knowledge . . . But then his case was slightly different—he was merely working some time in a mission field for the experience before taking on one of the major administrative positions . . . All General Assembly workers have to have had some actual missionary experience."

"Hardly worth his time—he was only there for the ride."

He smiled. "It's always so easy to know best for other men, but to me it's better to speak directly, rather than through a third voice—saves many misunderstandings which, medically, could be dangerous . . . And then, in trying to explain biblical ideas we tend to use biblical language, coloured as it is by both Greek and Hebrew, whereas what one needs is those ideas expressed in Baluka."

"Yes," I said . . . and he must have tumbled that I was taking the mick, and smiled.

"Do I sound so priggish?" he said.

"You're improving," I said, and we laughed.

AND SO ROUND THE LAST OF THE GRASS AND OVER THE LOW RAILINGS twenty yards the far side of JF, as close as we'd been—but I couldn't hear him, which, with his public-address system of a voice, wasn't what you'd expect. So I had a good look in his direction, and (so help me again) he'd gotten down from the park-chair and was merely standing there with the well set-up woman who'd have known how to deal with me had she been a man—both seeming disconsolate and somehow pathetic, no crowd around, no supporters, nothing but whatever strength they had between them . . . what I had taken for his group must have been a drift of people, now drifted.

Now what I had half-thought of doing was something probably typical of me: getting on the bike, chugging up and honking till he noticed us—and then, when he saw who we were, blasting off the first nasty remark to come into my head and accelerating away before he could organize a baton-charge. But seeing just the pair of them gave me the cheek to be courageous.

"Come on," I said to him, "I'd like you to meet a couple I know."

Which wasn't being all that fair with him, except that he'd come a long way since Friday morning . . . and we walked on over.

She saw us coming first, and said something to JF, who turned, at least recognized me (the photograph of Laurence in the *Chronicle* could have been ten other men), and shifted his feet into what I remembered as his debating position, still wearing his raincoat like a cape, staring eyes.

"Ah!" he said as we reached sparring distance, "the young man with liberal views."

She just nodded, this obviously being something best left with him.

"Hello," I said, "warm for the time of year, isn't it?"

Normally I don't think he'd have bothered with me, but there was nothing else so readily available, and he no doubt needed to give himself a bit of a leg-up for not having drawn a crowd.

"Climatic conditions would appear to be your sole topic. Have you no interest in the wider horizons of world affairs?"

"None," I said, "I'm a family man myself," and smiled at the pair of them sweet as you like, half from embarrassment, half enjoyment.

"Then I need detain you no longer," and went to turn away, though more as a gesture than a movement elsewhere.

"Before you go—I'd like you to meet a friend of mine, only you missed him the other morning and you might not get another chance: Dr. Kinman."

And, as with Mr. Stone earlier, you could see most of it on *his* face too, except he hadn't what passed for Christianity to smile: this, this renegade, this traitor, this race-integrationist who wanted dealing with as those who brought him up had taught him to deal with those who have no proper pride in race, but dealing with when there were thirty or forty Party Members about and handy, gathered to battle, whereas there was but himself and the woman, women being what they are, and himself past his prime, though if he were a younger man he'd have thrashed the pair of us, craven politicians that we were (shoulders strained back just that bit, small hands clenched), but there we were, two younger men, both tall—Kinman a terrorist and convict, undoubtedly capable of nameless brutality and unimaginable savagery—and yet there *was* the woman looking to him. . . . All this in two, three seconds of not knowing what to say.

But he had something, you had to grant him that, and he came up punching. "Such a man could be no friend of mine," he said, but made no further move to turn away—obviously wanted a full fifteen rounds of boxing.

Which puzzled Laurence, and he hesitated with his outstretched hand—I'd said I knew them, hadn't I? and he looked at me and then back at JF, who was nervous—at least, he traced his lips with the tip of his tongue. The woman was waiting a lead, fiddling with the belt of her mac.

"I'm sorry," said Laurence, "I've no wish to offend you."

And JF, like the flaming patriot he was, took politeness for cowardice. "You do offend me, you and all your snivelling kind of utterly leprous scoundrels—you, you deserve to have your offence driven back into your teeth."

Which was the lead the woman lived on, and she tightened her belt with a cruel-looking jerk . . . 36 waist if an inch.

"I think it would be better if we went," said Laurence to me.

"All you snivelling black stooges are the same," she said, "yellow right down your spine."

"Suit yourself," I said to Laurence. "Mrs. Lucas managed it better than I've done."

And he saw some of what I meant, and smiled—but JF was, by now, almost without warning, congested with anger, eyes bulging, fingers splayed, probably couldn't bear to be ignored.

"A typically despicable stampede from those capable of exposing your corrupt and unspeakable racialism for the infamous perversion it is!" he shouted more than said, people stopping to listen (which didn't escape his notice), the East End in his voice having the first, last, and every word now, his eyes painful to look at . . . "irresponsible, bloody-minded negrophilism! debauched and loathsome . . ." More excited than he ought to have been, the woman not sure, people closing-in . . . "breakdown of civilized standards, massacre, rape, cruelty and horror and violence, lack of realism in weak degenerate cowards . . ." Laurence concerned, looking at him carefully . . . "Africans reverting to savage propensities, aided and abetted by such swine as you egged-on by the wolf-packs of international Jewry, all swine and pigs, blood . . ."

"Please," said Laurence, "please don't excite yourself, you ought . . ."

"Excite!" screamed JF and slapped him across the face in one dramatic movement, people surging . . . and Laurence looked at him for what seemed a long time, the muscles of his jaw tight—and then turned away and pushed through the new crowd, the woman with her hand to her mouth, JF silent at his own power.

I took a firmer grip on the straps of the crash-helmet I was carrying. "Try that on me," I said to him, "I'm not half the man he is."

But didn't really give him much chance, just pushed past on after Laurence, people letting me, curious—not that I think JF would have lifted a finger what with being ten feet tall with it and already turning to clamber back up on the park-chair, and not that I'm all that sure I'd have clouted him with what I had: I'm not even sure he heard me . . . which is the way of these things.

LAURENCE HADN'T GOT FAR, THE FIRST OF THE TREES ALONG THE North Carriage Road, the voice of JF shrill behind us . . . and I didn't know where to put my face, what to say, anything.

"That's all right," he said, "don't let it worry you."

"I had no idea, none . . . I knew he had a big mouth, but . . ."

He smiled. "Mother had a heavier swipe . . . But whoever was he?"

And so, from there to the bike, I told him from the first sight of the demonstrators outside the prison to the last word of their spokesman (JF, who but?) as reported in the *Evening News*.

"He's a sick man," he said, "ought not to get excited . . . couldn't be certain without a proper examination, but he appears to be exophthalmic."

"Those eyes? staring?"

"And the excitement, almost hypnomanic." Then he laughed. "But I'm not really qualified to judge—in any event it was best not to excite him any more than I had."

"Nasty piece of work," I said. "Who could love a man the like of that?"

"The girl does," he said, which was something wouldn't have occurred to me. Calling her a girl, I mean.

ANYWAY, WE GOT ON, THE BIKE STARTED FIRST TIME OF KICKING, and away we chugged, along the Park road, round The Ring, over the Serpentine, out by Alexandra Gate into Kensington, down the Old Brompton Road, then through the back-doubles on to the Fulham Road, over Wandsworth Bridge into Wandsworth, across the Common, past another London prison (O men and brethren), and so down Garratt Lane into South Wimbledon and Environs, bang bang.

ANOTHER MIDDLE-CLASS ROAD, RUNNING TO LATTER DAY HALF-timbering and stained-glass galleons in the front-doors, houses in blocks of eight or ten, the Standard saloon well there before us (which wasn't really to be wondered at), parked outside a corner house, neat little privet hedge, neat little front garden, a carved oak shingle on thin brass chains above the door: FENWAY . . . though Mr. Moss did come from Cambridge.

The first thing I did was honk . . . and out came the kids, Anna and all, no pony-tail now, no ribbon even, but hair all over the place, white dress grubby, hands and knees as dirty as any—but all of them happy, giggling, eyes alive and full of it . . . and we kissed the lot and tickled and chased them in, Laurence laughing as I'd never heard him, a burden gone.

"Just what she needs," he said as I closed the door, "though what Mrs. Moss will be making of it I can't imagine."

AND THAT WAS ANOTHER CONTINUATION OF THE BEGINNING . . . the women were in the kitchen ("kitchenette" would be the word in that part of London), Joan sitting at the table buttering bread, looking tired, Mrs. Moss at the sink washing lettuce, and Margaret at the cupboard sorting through a cake-tin.

"Hello, Laurence," she said, "I was off at four o'clock."

And, as before, he stepped in like a champion, crash-helmet and all, held her and kissed her, sweet as you like, her arms coming up round his neck, standing on tiptoe to be that much closer . . . and Mrs. Moss looked startled for just that second, then smiled, and I gave Joan the wink and a kiss to be going on with . . . and there was Laurence kissing Mrs. Moss on the cheek, the kids dancing underfoot, the kettle boiling, and Mr. Moss at the door in his shirt-sleeves to see what all the noise was about.

"We rather thought you might have lost your way," he said, "it does get a bit tricky once you get past the Town Hall."

"Lost it?" said Laurence, "just finding it."

And Margaret knew, and Joan knew, and I knew—and that was enough, and, for some lost reason or another, I remembered the lorry-driver and his mate setting out on their way to Wolverhampton, and hoped they'd made it as well.

ANYWAY, ONE AND ALL, WE WASHED HANDS AND KNEES AND SMALL screwed-up faces, got the kids sat down round the living-room table ("dining" would be another one of those words), the two little girls the same age together if they promised to be good, the others at tactical intervals, sat down ourselves, and then started on what there was, Anna saying Grace as she was pretend hostess (*We bless thee Lord for this our food*, in this case bread and butter in thin triangles, lettuce, tomatoes, water-cress, a jar of celery, scrambled eggs, a big dish of stewed pears cold, and home-made cakes with nuts on top, and orange-squash for the kids, and tea for us, weak and milky in delicate little cups, *make us strong and keep us good, Amen*), and so, what with one thing and another, and it being the first time there for us (though Joan had met Mr. and Mrs. Moss at a Denominational Conference once), we didn't get much chance to say a lot round the point except the general run of this, that, and life in thin slices . . . pass the celery please,

both of us making sure ours behaved themselves, no elbows on the table, Laurence and Margaret looking at each other and then round at the rest of us, Mrs. Moss still feeling responsible for Anna, fussing just that bit, the pears very cold, must have been in a fridge, he still had the tremor, hardly noticeable though . . .

"Why were you so late?" said Joan.

Which meant that we had to tell an edited version of our time, no bother, what women don't know they're not supposed to worry about . . . and from there to safe comments about the afternoon Meeting . . .

"I did enjoy that chorus out of *Elijah*," said Mr. Moss. "They did it well."

(Mendelssohn? sounded like Handel to me, though it may have been the Choral.)

. . . on account little D-O-N-K-E-Y-S did still have big E-A-R-S, and sleepy little heads by the look of them . . . which brought up the question of getting back for bed . . .

"Ma, they stay Daddy?" said Anna, "*please*, their Mummy said and Nanna said they could as well, didn't you, Nanna?"

"They won't be all that much more to cope with," said Mrs. Moss.

"What do you think?" said Joan to me, the kids already on the breath of cheering.

"Suit yourself," I said. "Do you need persuading?"

"Well," she said . . .

"I'll run them home in the car," said Mr. Moss, "say sometime tomorrow afternoon—will that be convenient?"

"You don't know the relief it'll be," said Joan.

"Wish someone would do as much with my ward," said Margaret.

"Do you promise to be good?" we said to them . . .

But the answer was lost in the happiness.

THREE-QUARTERS OF AN HOUR LATER, RISING EIGHT, WE HAD THEM all in one bed, two at each end, ours in borrowed pyjamas, more innocent-looking in drowsiness than in fact, cuddled up snug, prayers said, kisses all round, and left whispering . . . the table cleared, the washing-up done, and ourselves sat in the front-room (sorry, "lounge") for an hour or so before we need think of going . . . and all we did was talk some more, a lot said and a lot meant, Mr. and Mrs. Moss, for all their delicate little cups, had a brew

strong as ours, especially about how the Denomination was sliding down the broad way of dark blue Wilton carpet, the money it must have cost to have built such a place, for Fenton Miller Gould to have flown over, the money there was about and the Missions so short of supplies . . .

"Saw two West Indians from our church," said Mr. Moss, "not that I have anything against them as such, but these two, man and wife, they haven't been in the country five minutes, and there they were driving away from the Meeting in an enormous American car which must have cost every penny of a thousand pounds."

"Probably on H.P.," said Margaret, "so we ought not to hold it against them—in fact I've always found them most faithful in tithes and offerings."

"Did it have great flaring tail-fins?" I said, "rear-lights big enough for a train?"

"That must be the one," said Mr. Moss, "there was nothing else like it when I parked, and if you saw it too it must be the same one."

And Laurence and I looked at each other, and had to laugh . . . and we told them about that . . .

"Although they all seem attracted to bright colours and gaudy things," said Laurence. "You'd have them buying shiny electrical goods down in Gathongo—these are the men recruited for the mines there—and coming back with them at the end of their two years, and no electricity anywhere near Yumbala except our hospital generator . . . Fantastic."

And then we got on to Fenton Miller Gould. . . "Just because he's the son of his father," said Mrs. Moss. "Would he be president of anything if he were just like Laurence here?"

Which made us all laugh more than it was worth, even her when she saw the funny side of it . . . and from Fenton Miller Gold to Mr. Stone . . .

"Those boys of his!" said Joan, "they were all over the settees."

"Indeed yes," said Mr. Moss, "although it's remarkable how very many of the children of ministers *are* out of hand."

"An occupational disease," said Margaret, "though some turn out well enough—you take Pastor Garland's son."

"Wesley," said Mrs. Moss, "beautiful voice, beautiful."

"*You* take him," I said . . . and there we were, off in another direction: what passed for singing these days, what passed for education at the College, what passed for Christianity in the

world . . . Laurence not saying a lot, but easy with it, Margaret happy to be with him, Mr. and Mrs. Moss glad to see them together, the wedding so soon and all, a very great deal to do, nothing grand of course, just themselves and us if we'd like to come . . .

"We'd love to," said Joan, "wouldn't we?"

"It's all done and settled then," said Mrs. Moss, "the twenty-seventh—we'll let you know the arrangements by letter."

"That's if I'm able to," said Joan, and we all laughed, each for our own reason, "I feel as big as though I could have it now and have *that* done and settled."

"At least you'd have a doctor in the house," said Mrs. Moss, and the laughter stayed, though I thought Joan's was a bit forced . . . and so on, from this to that, and from there to the other into the pale darkness of late evening, early night.

"Do you know what the time is?" said Mr. Moss.

"Time we ought to be going," said Margaret, "I have to be up in the morning."

"I'll drop you at your place," I said. "Without the kids there'll be tons of room in the sidcar."

"If you're sure," she said.

WE WERE . . . AND THAT WAS THAT: MRS. MOSS MADE SOME HOT chocolate (nothing so crude as cocoa), which we drank weak as it was, then went, quietly, upstairs, shush, to have a look at the kids . . . moved you to see them, little faces closed in sleep, arms round each other, innocent as apples, though how she'd manage in the morning was another question . . . down again, bits and bobs collected, things on, and so out into the warm half-darkness . . . few stars, the full moon riding, clouds in the smoldering west . . .

"Looks rather as though we're in for thunder later on," said Mr. Moss, but I didn't give him a chance to tap any barometers, takes long enough to get away from such evenings at the best of times . . . dashed about, got good nights said, Joan and Margaret in, us on fore and aft, the bike started third time of kicking, lights switched on, everybody waved, and away we chugged, labouring just that bit, down the road, waved again at the corner (though I doubt they saw us, quite dark once you'd got going), round, through the back-doubles on to the Morden Road, and so through Mitcham into Carshalton . . . but this time I didn't stop at the end of her road, but at the last lamp-post but one—just enough to give them a few yards on their own.

And Laurence and I helped her out, she leaned in and kissed Joan, and I thought of bread-and-butter.

"Thank you," she said to me, and we shook hands, both grinning for the same reason probably, though Joan wouldn't have minded . . . and then the pair of them walked away down, waved at the fringe of light, we waved back, and that was another bit of that.

"I DO HOPE HE'S QUICK," SAID JOAN, "BUT I FEEL THAT CRAMPED and uncomfortable."

"Think you'll be all right?"

She laughed. "Case of having to."

And I got back on, and we waited there under the lamp, the lid of the sidecar up.

"Funny how there was nothing much said about Barbara," she said. "I've got a feeling there's not much love lost between her and the family, only Mrs. Moss was saying that she keeps on taking up with a young man, even been engaged, I think it's twice, and then calls it off."

"Probably green to the gills over Margaret."

"And what a surprise over Anna."

"Wonder how Margaret will manage with her?" . . . and so on, another skein of the continuous thread.

"Do hope they won't be much longer," she said, "there are limits to smoothing the course of other people's love-life."

So I honked . . . and in under time enough he came back and into the fringe of light.

"One thing," he said, "but we've both completely forgotten that your rear-light isn't working—I noticed it as I came along."

Not that I'd really forgotten—but these conscience-stricken characters can be somewhat of a strain sometimes. "There's nothing we can do about it—we'll just have to take a chance on it, that's all."

Which we did, there being nothing much else for it, and I started up and away we chugged, through Croydon and Beckenham back to Bromley—but they had my conscience niggled too, and every corner hid a copper, every side-street a police-car.

JUST THE ONE NEAR THING.

Going along Holmsdale Road, one turning from home, there was some blaring lunatic, driving on his horn, trying to overtake

us on the blind bend, and I wouldn't let him—and he kept his finger on the button, and kept flashing his lights to let me know that mine weren't working . . . and I found myself going just that bit more than thirty than usual . . .

Round the corner into our road, sharp—and the sidecar reared . . . the car blared on along Holmsdale . . .

And I got control, and the sidecar bumped back down, bang, bouncing.

BUT WE MADE IT, NOT MUCH SHAKEN, BACK INTO OUR COLD HOUSE . . .

"I'm all right," she said, "but I think I'll go up to bed—just put the kettle on for a bottle, I could do with one tonight."

"I'll make a cup of tea as well, that stuff Mrs. Moss made was awful."

Laurence laughed. "Didn't like to suggest it myself."

"Bring me one up," she said, "I won't wait about down here."

"Right you are," I said, and up she lumbered . . . half-way, and then came back.

"Laurie, you can sleep in one of the children's beds, that'll save you making the spare bed up—Kath's will be best. I couldn't put my hand on clean sheets at the moment either."

"Don't worry," he said, "we'll manage—you go on up."

She smiled. "Good night, Laurence," she said . . . and you could tell that's why she'd come back down, forgotten, and wanted an excuse. Instead of calling.

"Hope you sleep well," he said, and she made it that time.

AND WE WENT OUT INTO THE KITCHEN, LIT THE OVEN FOR SOME comfort, got the kettle on and the things ready . . . and waited for it to boil.

"Watched pot," he said.

Which reminded me I'd watched his for long enough.

"So what's with this Janek and blasphemy?" I said. "You're driving me up all manner of curious walls."

He took his time about answering. "*I was* under somewhat of a strain," and stopped as though he'd thought better of saying anything.

"Suit yourself."

"No," he said, and smiled, nervous, "no, I will tell you, but I've got no evidence to prove anything, nothing worth a tickey, no . . ." His smile became real. "No documentation of any kind—you'll

just have to accept my word for the truth of everything . . . But, well—can we just get this done and Joan settled? She needs something after that bump.”

“You’ve got yourself a deal,” I said, and the kettle boiled quicker than that, we made the tea, filled the hot-water bottle, poured Joan the first cup, plenty of milk, I left him stirring sugar into ours, reflectively the only word, and went on up trying not to spill any.

“IT DOESN’T SEEM SO COLD NOW,” SHE SAID, “BUT I’LL HAVE IT JUST the same,” and she took the bottle and slid it down to her feet. “You don’t know the relief.”

“The tea is stirred,” and she took it and was thirsty for it, drank it in one breath.

“I suppose you two will be staying up late?”

“A distinct possibility.” And we smiled.

“Well just remember there’s a distinct possibility of your having to go to work in the morning, even if he hasn’t—and try not to wake me when you come up. And bring the clock with you.”

“Yes, my lady,” I said, took the cup she was pretending to be about to throw at me, gave her an interim kiss, tucked her side of the bed in when she’d snuggled down, and made for the door.

“I’ve been looking forward to this all evening,” she said into the pillow.

“Make the most of it—no little feet to clamber all over us in the morning.”

“Thank goodness,” she said. “Now not too late—and leave the door open, don’t want to feel cut off.”

“No, my lady,” I said, switched out the light, and came on down.

HE LOOKED UP FROM WHERE I’D LEFT HIM SITTING AT THE KITCHEN table, though he’d obviously been looking at the blue Programme Anna had given him to mind, just that bit too casual about the way he wasn’t looking at it now, there beside the teapot.

“My Crusader,” he said, “I’ve just this minute remembered his name—Blanford, Sir John Blanford, I saw the inscription as clear as day.” And seemed more relieved than it was worth. “So much for your memory-blockage theory.”

I shrugged—what was I supposed to do? cheer? . . . and then, for some other lost reason, I thought of something else. “Did you get a chance to talk to Margaret about going up to Stoke at all?”

“Next week-end, all being well.”

"Good for you."

He looked puzzled. "Why do you sound so enthusiastic?"

I drank some tea, sweet and strong. "You worried me—you seemed to remember your mother and father with some fondness, your boyhood, Stoke Old Road, and all the rest of it—and yet you weren't going home. First place I made for when I got out of the Army."

And he drank some tea, probably for the same reason, still just the slightest tremor, but he didn't seem to mind my noticing now. "It's all very difficult . . . Were you sure of your reception?"

"Flags in the street," I said. "Me and my medals."

He laughed, but didn't go on to say anything.

"Wasn't your mother reported as saying that Stoke was your home?" I said.

This time his laughter was bitter. "*We will never turn him away, no matter what he has done*," he said, this thick edge back in his voice. "Newspapers!"

"Don't you think she did?"

"I don't doubt for a minute she did, but it's what's been left unsaid. '*No matter what he has done*' . . . What am I? a criminal to be received back with reservations?"

"Most people think of you as one."

"But my own mother and father? surely they . . ."

"You haven't given them a chance to think otherwise," I said, and smiled. "Come to think of it, you haven't given any of us much chance either."

He finished that cup, and seemed to find resolution in putting it down carefully. "I think, in their eyes, I should have stayed in Stoke and not risen above myself—I think that's the root of the trouble."

I had to laugh, he was that serious and sorry for himself. "Not on your life!" I said, "there just aren't any more people like that left these days."

But he took it well. "No, it wasn't just becoming a doctor—after all, what's a doctor? although Father was awkward about that at first, but going out to Africa, something he was completely unable to understand.

"'Charity begins at home,' he said to me more than once, 'you've seen need here in Potteries, without gallivanting off where you're not wanted.'

"Even Mother wasn't what you could call a missionary's mother,

but with her Baptist background she wasn't so much at a loss to appreciate the, er, call I believed I had. Not that I'd have been able to answer any call without training—which was the first bone of contention. I mean, there I was, fourteen and able to leave elementary school, the times hard, and now a potential wage-earner—and all I wanted to do was go on to grammar school on a scholarship I'd won. Mother was willing, sacrifice though it would have been, but Father wouldn't hear of it.

"'We can't afford it, Ethel,' he kept saying, 'we can't be expected to do the impossible.'

"There was just a small grant—this was before the war—barely enough to cover books and clothes, and they used to be on about it late into the night, but Father was right, they couldn't have afforded it, my place was to be out bringing in a few shillings. And Mother eventually agreed. I can see her eyes now the time she told me, red from crying—but then I suppose I was as cruel and stupid as we mostly are at that age, and there was a scene."

He stopped, and seemed to be tensing himself to go on, and I poured the two second cups as quietly as I could, just watching me . . .

"That was the first and last time Father took his belt to me . . . I don't think Mother could find it in her to forgive him, and we lived in an unhappy house for weeks. And she must have told her troubles at church, because, a week or so later, Pastor and Mrs. Lucas came and talked Mother and Father into letting them subsidize grammar school . . . and they did, and practically all my training—though I did get grants, and worked at nights to help pay my way." He smiled. "What Brother Gould would no doubt call a 'childhood struggle for education' . . . But I'm sure Father has never forgotten this crossing of his will, quite apart from feeling it wasn't right for other people to have to support a child of his—independent if it kills them . . . And then, when I *was* trained, and could have been what he called 'a credit' to them, then to want to work first in Germany, then Africa—well, it was beyond them . . ."

He stopped again, and I motioned him his cup—not that he noticed.

"And then everything having to end like this . . . I can imagine what they'll be thinking, the pride it will need for them to face the neighbours—not, of course, that either of them will say a word about it."

"Neighbours care less than you'd think," I said.

"We'll see," he said.

"And what's all this about 'having to end like this'? I thought you and Margaret would be making tracks back to Africa as soon as you could."

"As a Prohibited Immigrant?"

"Africa's a big place," I said, "and these days not every Government is a white one—with your record as a Freedom Fighter you'd probably get made Minister of Health."

He smiled with me, but sadly. "I somehow can't imagine the Coloured Workers League approving such an appointment if the truth was known."

AND WE THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR A BIT, DRANK THE REST OF THE TEA, looked at the washing-up from dinner, put another shilling in the meter for the gas oven, the night outside dark now, probably the thunder coming up . . .

"I know Christ promised a cross to his followers," he said from his nowhere, "but it's never the one you expect. It would be easy to die a martyr if it could be an act of public witness—but this private knowledge of public misunderstanding is not what I looked for at all." He smiled. "Which is, I suppose, precisely why mine takes this form."

"If a man can't have an arena, he must make do with a kitchen in Bromley . . . why is this Janek business blasphemous?"

He fingered his spoon as though scraping something with it, and I thought even then he was going to slide out from under—but no.

"Well," he said, and took a breath, "make no : stake about it—Janek was all he was said to be: a good physicist, worth his Nobel Prize, and he gave up a lot to become a missionary. I think perhaps his motives were mixed, his wife had recently died, he had narrowly escaped death with the reactor—I even believe his facial scar had something to do with his decision to leave America. He never mentioned it and was sensitive to the point of touchiness—but his conversion was genuine enough . . . it was tested by ten years of Yumbala and the Baluka, and that would test any Christian . . ."

He seemed to be suddenly easier with it now, another night outside the window, other stars, other sounds . . .

"Although it wasn't easy to see how he could reconcile this

service with all the publicity it received—we were always having photographers and journalists about the place, taking pictures of operations and some of the more unpleasant tropical deformities . . . But, as Janek used to say, 'The money, it is useful for supplies,' and, like my father, he was probably right: without such money, and that from his own books, the hospital could never have grown the way it did. I'm quite sure the Denomination could never have afforded its up-keep—we had ninety beds, and a need for hundreds."

"Too busy building nice new Headquarters," I said.

But he let it go. "No, Janek had his reasons, although I didn't share them . . . Christ himself said, '*Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them*' . . ."

"Like lancing boils," I said.

"I do wish Margaret hadn't told you, I don't see that she . . ."

"I'm glad *you* didn't," I said, and he knew what I meant, and looked like a boy caught doing a good deed by his favourite uncle—which gave him what it took to go on.

"Yes, Janek had his reasons right enough, but he was also more of a mixture than many of his admirers can find it in themselves to admit. There was his vanity, liking to be photographed, written about—and then, as an ex-Catholic, he was probably less sure of his converted faith than most of us. . . ." He smiled. "Cradle Protestants. So, when he could be sure, he liked to be very sure, generally to the point of dogmatism and intolerance—and, being Polish, he had a stubborn, peasant determination about him which was undoubtedly a tremendous asset in research or building a hospital on the edge of a jungle. But it wasn't very helpful when it came to dealing with people—which was, I suppose, one of the reasons he preferred working alone. That way it was always *his* way."

"Over the bridge," I said, "never by the ford."

"Precisely—the point being that about such things he was generally right, but with people less often so. And that was the beginning of the trouble with Kumali . . ."

Another night, other stars, the Lukatembe wide and slow on its sweep through the mind, a distance of low hills . . . still fingering the spoon, delicately.

"You see, Janek had this inflexible rule that once any native had started to receive treatment they had to give up the use of charms

and ju-ju, and, if they didn't, or if they went back to the witch-doctors, then he stopped treatment. He once even risked the possible death of a chief's favourite wife from strangulated hernia because there was some kind of amulet around her neck when he had her on the operating-table. Whatever you may think, that, with the Baluka, was a courageous thing to have done—he never lacked courage.”

“What happened to the woman?”

“I believe he summoned the chief, made him take the amulet off with his own hands, and drop it into the dirty-pail—which was a courageous thing for the chief to have done.” He must have seen what I was thinking. “No, it's all very well for you long-range liberals to say such things are unnecessarily dictatorial, but I rather fancy that Janek knew a little bit more about ‘the primitive mind of these children of nature’ than you do. The Baluka respect a strong man, and they respected Janek. Kumali did more—he almost worshipped him.”

“What about the woman? Did she recover?”

“I don't really know. It was a little before my time, but I rather imagine she must have done as that chief was a Christian when I knew him.”

“How many wives did he have then?” I said, meaning to be nasty.

“He'd sent all but one back to their fathers, as well as returning the *lobolo* involved—must have been a considerable number of cattle.”

“Did he keep the youngest one?” Still nasty, which niggled him.

“Naturally—the other wives probably agreed among themselves that, being only a month or so married, and so childless, she had most right to him as a husband.” And he beat me to the question. “I delivered her first, a boy, soon after I arrived.”

“Sorry,” I said.

“Short-range liberals are the kind I like,” he said, not nastily as I might have done, but with too much truth for comfort.

“Strangulated hernia,” I said, “was Janek a good enough surgeon for that?”

“In terms of qualifications, no, I don't suppose he was—but in terms of what he had to do to survive at all in face of the needs of the Baluka it's an academic point. And he had enough to get by on . . . A thing that's generally forgiven is that he did some medical training in his youth, and although he subsequently became a

physicist he specialized in radiation protection, and so was probably as much a doctor as anything."

"But surgeon?"

He smiled. "With all due respect to my colleagues, it's more a mechanical art than you'd realize, and Janek was extremely deft in many ways, better with bones than I'd ever be. And there again, faced with somatic tumours and hernias it was simply a question of making an attempt or letting the patient die—there wasn't a hospital in the next street, or a specialist on the other end of a phone. In fact, although I was better trained theoretically and probably better equipped manually, he had rough and ready methods which used to make me wince, but which *worked*—which is the only test under those conditions." He smiled. "Not that I didn't do my best to reform his technique, but he was a more courageous surgeon than many another more distinguished. And he had an excellent small working library to fall back on, there being a first time for any operation—you read up all you can beforehand, pray there won't be any complications, do your best, and then rely on good nursing. Men have been knighted for doing less."

He smiled, still at the spoon, and I began to see that he was probably remembering the feel of this and that instrument or whatever.

"In fact, during my first week, I drained a cerebellar abscess with him, neither of us ever having performed the operation, although I'd seen it done."

And he thought about it some more, the spoon now obviously making an incision in an imaginary area defined between the thumb and middle-finger of his left hand . . . and then he caught himself at it, stopped, saw that I'd noticed, and smiled as he put it down carefully.

"My nerves must be in quite a state," he said.

"Perhaps you ought to call a specialist on the other end of the phone," I said, and we laughed. "Janek sounds a different person altogether as you talk about him."

"How rarely the truth satisfies people—they either want a stained-glass saint . . ."

"Or a Crusader?"

"Or a simple outline, black and white . . . no spots at the feast of charity." Which was a new one on me, but I guessed what he meant.

"And Kumali worshipped him?"

"No," he said, "that was too strong a word—let's say he respected him as the Baluka did. Not that he was a Baluka himself, but a Shona-speaking Southern Bantu of the, I think, Manyika tribe, from the Umtali area of Southern Rhodesia; but I believe it remains true of most Africans. Their society is still largely tribal, extremely authoritarian in character, and they respond to such authority. No," he said, as he could see I was about to blast off on brotherhood and equality, "in actual practice it's a mistake to do other than advance by little steps with them—tell them what to do, leaving nothing unsaid or uncertain, and you'll get it done—probably. But, ask them, suggest to them, as you would with a European, and they'll laugh at you behind your back and you'll wait till the cows come home. I think it was Schweitzer himself who said something to the effect that although they were indeed our brothers, they are our younger ones."

"Benevolent paternalism," I said.

"That's very much mind what it's called; it's the way that works—it doesn't necessarily mean injustice or resentment, which paternalism so very often involves . . ." He paused, and I knew what he was thinking: leather lashing into flesh—black or white, *sjambok* or belt, Stoke or Mulumbi, what difference did it make in terms of pain and humiliation? "But, in brotherhood, it's the only way to get anything done—and, as what's being done is usually for their own good, I fail to see what the objections amount to."

Which was too much for me by a mile. "Do they dig out gold for their own good?" I said, "diamonds? copper? do they run about as servants for their own good? the arse out of their trousers, going, coming, knowing their place—which is in the backyard as far away from the house as possible. Treated well. O yes! there are regulations, but you can't expect human beings treated like prize animals not to resent it, they're bound to . . . It makes me sick!"

"I'm sorry," he said, concerned, "I was really only talking about the Baluka at Yumbala, where what was done in the way of treatment and training was for their good, being in the name of Christ—what happens in the name of Mammon elsewhere is another matter about which I . . ."

Another night, other agony, and you could see it on his face.

"Sophiatown," he said, "you must remember I did spend that little time there . . ."

"My fault," I said. "Crossed wires . . . only connect."

He went to pick up the spoon again, but thought better of it.

"Kumali had grown up in just such a township in Gathongo, and it was only by the grace of God he didn't go the way of many others; but, as I say, he was converted, came up to Yumbala and was trained by Janek as the dispenser—and there was a relationship between them I can only describe as more like that of a father, and son. A stern father it's true, and a son with a mind of his own, but a good relationship for all that . . . which was the real tragedy, bad resulting from something essentially good."

I gave him the time he obviously needed . . . bit of a wind blowing up outside, rattling the windows—hoped it wouldn't wake Joan.

"You see," he said, "it was this rule about not reverting to ju-ju once a native had started treatment, in itself a sensible condition to insist upon, as one never quite knew what concoctions were being administered from other sources—which could be a serious matter when prescribing certain kinds of drugs, say those acting on the alimentary system. Not much use prescribing an anti-emetic if the patient very shortly afterwards swallows one of the dreadful mixtures I've seen used . . . No, Janek was right to insist—but it led to hard decisions. There was this particular case, the beginning of the trouble. All this was shortly before I reached Yumbala, but as far as I was able to piece together Janek had diagnosed an uncomplicated infection of the urinary tract in a girl of about eight, and had prescribed standard sulphonamide therapy—that would be a first dose of, say, up to half an adult dosage, followed by a smaller dose every six or so hours until three or four days after the worst symptoms had subsided. But when, after a day of these doses, the child's mother was unable to see any marked improvement, which was hardly surprising as a full course lasts a week, she thought it best to 'insure with two companies', and she bought some kind of charm which she tied around the child's waist, hoping Janek wouldn't spot it. But he did, and forthwith refused all further treatment. Apparently the mother grovelled on the floor to him, but he wouldn't relent . . . He was just that kind of man, a bit of a natural Calvinist I suppose, and, by rights, that should have been the end of it."

"What would have happened to the child?"

"I don't know, I had no personal dealings with the case, but she might well have recovered naturally, it's difficult to say. But a

month or so later Janek noticed her running about the compound, apparently none the worse, and by diligent questioning he found out—probably the child told him in all innocence—he found out that the course of treatment *had* been completed . . . by Kumali.”

“Good for him.”

He shook his head. “There could have been so many toxic reactions—crystallization, sedimentation—serious complications, obstruction, anæmia . . . and Janek was furious, Sister Nomusa had never seen him so angry. He stormed and ranted at Kumali in his mixture of kitchen-Kaffir, English, Polish, and German, and poor Kumali was mystified: ‘But my doctor,’ he said, ‘you were willing for the death of the child, I was willing for her life.’”

“Which didn’t improve matters, as not only did Janek hate being argued with, it stated the dilemma of his position with great clarity—for the sake of a general principle he was prepared to let a particular patient die, and an innocent one as well, whereas Kumali, for all the unknown risks he ran, was at least doing his best for that particular patient.”

“What do you think?”

“Heart and head—my heart went out to Kumali, it was a fault of love; but my reason tells me how dangerous a course he took. He was, as I say, a good dispenser, but he really didn’t know enough about all the factors involved—although I will say, given training, he would have made as good a doctor as he was dispenser.”

“And all we could find to do with him was shoot him down like an animal.”

We gave it time. “But that wasn’t all,” he said, “because he admitted he’d been doing the like for months . . . Janek would discontinue or refuse treatment, and Kumali would go on giving it. Most of the cases were quite simple ones, rashes, burns, small wounds, but he’d actually continued with a course of penicillin for a case of tertiary syphilis, giving, in his ignorance, larger and larger doses as the treatment failed to produce favourable reactions—which was where the drugs were going. And Janek had never discovered, as Kumali acted as his interpreter and so was able to shield him from the truth. Not only that, but he also kept the books.”

“Did he cook them at all?”

“Not by so much as a ticky—every treatment, whether approved by Janek or not, and every charge for it was scrupulously entered

in Kumali's beautifully old-fashioned copper-plate: had Janek ever bothered to examine them the truth must have come out."

"I think I'm on his side, heart *and* head."

"But Janek was responsible. Had any deaths resulted he would have been held to blame, not Kumali. As it was, his authority was being flouted, a lot depended upon that authority, and, as I say, he wasn't the kind of man to cross . . . But, and this is the surprising thing, he decided, after his first anger had subsided, to do nothing about it—why, I don't know, probably because there was such a relationship between them, I just don't know—and Kumali promised not to do such a thing again . . . And that was the state of affairs when I arrived in the middle of December. Janek told me about it of course, in no uncertain terms—but, in fact, we got on rather well together those early weeks. You see, having worked in Germany, I spoke and understood some German and . . ."

He picked up the spoon and looked at it as though for the first time.

"Some German and a little Polish," he said, and had it beaten. "He used to mutter to himself in both languages when he was engrossed, and one day I must have given him something of a shock by completing a remark he'd started in German in his own Polish—although he was always twitting me that he could no longer speak his mind as he used to. And, with such a man, there might have been more in that than met the eye, as his language was often more peasant than physicist . . . However, all went well until some time at the end of January. I began to fit in with the hospital routine, delivered one or two babies, performed one or two operations so that he could see if I was what he wanted, and then began to hold my own surgery in the mornings, and take my own patients . . . Until one day, when I'd almost finished those waiting, Kumali brought me my first tropical ulcer, in the lower leg of a young man about his own age, causing considerable pain, and in what I afterwards discovered to be an extremely advanced state of sloughing. I was very much in his hands, as my knowledge of tropical medicine was more theoretical than practical, and although I favoured a surgical examination with, perhaps, an incision for removal and skin-grafting, I accepted his opinion that such cases always responded to an intramuscular injection of penicillin, and prescribed as such—and thought that the end of it, merely noting that the patient should attend for a further injection two days later. But, just as one of the sisters was preparing him for the hypo-

dermic, Janek came over from his rounds to see how I was getting on, took one look at the patient, and jumped into such a rage that I thought he was about to hit any or all of us. I can't hope to reproduce his language . . . the truth was that this young man had been on Janek's surgery two days before, had received his first injection, but had turned up that morning for the second with the leg wrapped in some kind of sickening poultice—he'd been to our local witch-doctor, and paid the price of a she-goat for a handful of dung mixed with God knows what else . . . and Janek had thrown him out, Kumali said literally, but Janek said that standing up had been enough to send him running, ulcerated leg and all—but I don't know."

"And that's where you spoke against his word?"

He nodded. "That leg was a sight, and when I knew it had been subjected to such a poultice I insisted on the surgical inspection. I said the man was my patient and that neither Janek nor anybody else would stop me doing what I could to save the leg—sometimes the gangrenous process seriously damages the muscles and tendons, even the periosteum of the bones, and, on another, later occasion I've had to amputate where the ulcer had been let go too long before treatment."

"How did Janek take it?"

"Well, there again, he was a surprising man. He lost his rage as quickly as he'd got it, agreed with my opinion, and even assisted at the subsequent incision for removal, doing a neater skin-graft than I was capable of . . . But I could see that Kumali was a worried man, the sisters were equally worried, and the rest of that day was a time of studied politeness—it was just that I didn't know the signs . . . I wasn't left long in much doubt. The next morning he announced to the entire staff at the prayer meeting that he had reported Kumali to the police for stealing medical supplies, and told me privately that he would write to the President of the African Assembly asking that I should be recalled . . . Within the hour Kumali had taken to the hills."

Men and brethren, and the like of it happening now . . . the spoon down again.

"What I can't understand," I said, "is why Janek was so hot on it? After all, you've said yourself it's advance by little steps with them. Surely, poultices apart, he could have tempered the wind and all that caper? What difference did the occasional amulet make?"

He smiled. "What difference does the occasional Miraculous Medal make? Yet I noticed you lifted an eyebrow when I first mentioned mine."

Of course, he had me, and all I could do was grin.

"No," he said, "it's difficult, but that was just the man. He knew his Baluka—as I often found to my cost, one small sign of weakness and they'd be on it in a flash . . . And he was trying to win them from ways and customs which—well, which certainly don't make for pleasant listening at this time of night. What he did with Kumali was the product of so many different things—and Kumali had promised."

A night of eyes, every man an enemy—and chafity a hunting dove with a gun in its claws; and, lo, in her mouth a death-warrant, signed.

"How long did he last in the hills?" I said.

"I think it was about a fortnight—he hadn't really got a chance, because although he tried to join up with one or other of the gangs roaming that area, they would have none of him, suspecting a planted agent. That was one of the methods used by the security forces, to send captured terrorists back into the jungle as agents—it had apparently worked in Kenya, although just how they persuaded them to do it remains a mystery to me, despite what I've been told about methods of 'friendly' persuasion. Kumali afterwards told me that it was by getting hold of wives and relatives as hostages, but I've no proof of that . . . But there he was, hunted by both hunters and hunted, and, lacking the requisite bushcraft, he was quickly cornered—and resisted arrest to the extent of fighting two or three men for minutes on end before being overpowered. Which told heavily against him at his trial, that and his criminal record as a child."

"Five years?" I said.

But he couldn't answer, being an agony away . . . and I gave him time—but he needed more than time.

"Gathongo Prison," he said, "O my . . . God! my God!"

AND I THOUGHT IT BEST TO SAY NOTHING, AND HE COVERED HIS FACE deep down in his hands, the agony racked him, dry, no tears, when it would have been better for there to have been tears . . . the wind outside piling clouds across the stars . . . night sounds, a train, a cat, a barking dog . . . and he drew in a breath, deep . . .

"Look, Laurence," I said, "there's no need for us to go on—it

must be getting ever so late, and I've got to be up in the morning even if you haven't . . ."

But the pain in his eyes was enough, and when he spoke his voice was uncontrolled, a bit as though he had a sore throat. "I must," he said . . .

' ANYWAY, WITHOUT GOING INTO ANY OF THE DETAILS, I MADE SOME more tea, and got him back with it . . .

"When Kumali arrived to start his sentence his reputation arrived with him, because he told me he was made to lift a large stone in his arms and run round and round the exercise-yard under the heat of the morning sun until he dropped—this was standard practice with awkward prisoners. During the year he spent there before he escaped he was twice flogged for . . . twenty strokes—he carried the scars to . . ." But this time he managed to hold back. "There's no need to go through it all—it's the age-old story of what man does to man. It started with Cain."

(Yes, I thought, except these days we give Cain a pension after forty loyal years in the Service.)

"I can understand him escaping," I said, "but why on earth did he come back to Yumbala? last place I'd have made tracks for."

"He escaped in order to come back to Yumbala—that was the whole point. He had to see Janek, he had to be forgiven."

"He had *what*?"

"To be forgiven, he wanted Janek to forgive him for what he'd done—but not as we, and certainly not as Janek understood forgiveness. As I said earlier, most of our theological ideas and many of our quite ordinary assumptions are not easy to translate into less complex languages, especially when we ourselves are not always quite clear what we mean, and the biblical idea of forgiveness was not necessarily what Kumali understood by the word. It's true he was extremely intelligent, well used to European ways, and indeed, in his own way, as good a Christian as I was—but it was in his own way, the way of an African." He could see I was about to blast off again. "No," he said, "it's just a different way, not necessarily a worse. After all, the images of Christ and His Mother in most African Catholic churches are those of a negro mother and child . . . No, Kumali probably thought, with his background and heritage, that if Janek forgave him, his troubles would be at an end—Yumbala was a small world one in which Janek was the very centre of all authority, a Chief among chiefs, and it was a

world in which Kumali had found satisfaction and fulfilment. Surely the man who had done so much for him could now forgive him? hadn't he been punished enough for forgiveness?"

"And Janek turned him in? The great Christian . . ."

"Listen to me," he said. "I was with Janek the night Kumali came. We'd been discussing an operation for the morning—and we got on splendidly together after that first outburst and the, er, report . . ." He smiled, a bit embarrassed. "I think, er, I must have fitted in with his little ways better than he'd feared, because he never mentioned it again, and we avoided the subject of Kumali altogether . . . However, that night we were in the operating theatre—and please don't think of it as anything like as grand as it sounds. It was extremely simple, merely being a windowless brick shed with a corrugated-iron roof, all the roofs there are corrugated-iron . . . We had books open, sandwiches, a flask of coffee, and we must both have been engrossed—because, suddenly, there was Kumali in the doorway, looking exhausted and drawn, and with shackles on his wrists, the links between them broken.

"'I have come back,' he said to Janek—I might just as well not have been there for all the notice either of them took of me.

"'What do you want?' asked Janek.

"'I have come back to be forgiven for the wrong I have done,' said Kumali.

"'It is first for Almighty God to forgive,' said Janek.

"'God has forgiven me,' said Kumali.

"'And I have forgiven you,' said Janek. 'What more do you want with me?' he said, and he made as if to collect his papers and leave, but Kumali . . . Kumali dropped to his knees, the tears smearing down the dirt on his face, the . . . the shackles clanking as he stretched his arms out to him.

"'My Father,' he pleaded, 'forgive me for my wrong.'

"'There is no Father but Almighty God in Heaven,' said Janek.

"'My Father,' pleaded Kumali, 'forgive me.'

"And Janek just couldn't understand."

"Can't say I'm any too clear myself," I said.

"Well," he said, "can't you see that by forgiveness Kumali probably meant for Janek to take him back? reinstate him? there and then?"

"But surely he knew he had four years' sentence to go? That's even if he didn't get another eighteen months for escaping."

"We can see it—but a prison sentence is not the African's natural

idea of punishment, and Kumali couldn't understand how Janek could forgive him and yet not stop the punishment. Under the tribal system of justice he would have been fined cattle and goats.

"'I have forgiven you,' Janek kept repeating, 'it is law which punish.' And the more they said the less they understood each other, Janek getting more and more exasperated, and I could see Kumali swaying with fatigue on his knees. And so I persuaded Janek to leave it and go to bed, and I did what I could to console Kumali and make him comfortable. He wolfed the last of the sandwiches and coffee, I . . . dressed . . ."

I thought he was going to break down again, but he managed not to.

"I dressed the lacerations of his recent flogging, bandaged his wrists to stop the shackles chafing more, and made him up a bed on the lowered operating-table . . . he'd been travelling on foot for three days . . . more than two hundred miles through that terrain in three days, on foot . . . and he went to sleep as though I'd given him a sedative."

He picked up the spoon and turned it in his fingers as though trying to find the weakest place to bend it. "Then I went to bed myself."

I waited, and noticed that the clock wasn't ticking, must have forgotten to wind it.

"The next morning there was a squad of *askaris*, twelve of them, waiting outside the one door of the operating theatre."

"Yes," I said, "the great Christian—did he go in and wake Kumali with a kiss?"

"What else could Janek have done than what he did? he had to inform the authorities. Sooner or later they'd have traced him to Yumbala . . ."

"He could have given him a chance to get away."

"Kumali didn't want to get away—he wanted Janek to forgive him . . . But I will say this—Janek insisted that Kumali be allowed to sleep his sleep out, and then, when Kumali came to the door, blinking in the sun, Janek was there to speak to him first . . . Although I've never seen a man so defeated as Kumali when fresh handcuffs were fastened on his wrists. He refused the food which Janek ordered to be brought for him, and didn't say another word to anyone except to me. 'Thank you, my Doctor,' he said, but in Baluka, not English.

"And then they got him into the truck, the corporal in charge

grinning, and it drove away down towards Mulumbi, the handages on his wrists white and somehow out of place."

"Bet Janek felt pleased with himself."

"Janek was as near to tears as anybody had ever seen him—even Sister Nomusa, who had known him from the beginnings of Yumbala."

"Beats me," I said. "Shove a man back into prison for another four or five years, and then cry about it."

"But don't you see," he began . . .

And then Joan called from upstairs, and called again, an edge of panic in her voice . . .

WE FOUND HER SITTING ON THE EDGE OF THE BED WITH THE LIGHT on.

"The waters have broken," she said. "I got up to come down on the toilet, and the waters have broken."

ANYWAY, WE DASHED ABOUT—LAURENCE GAVE AN EYE TO HER (WHO better?) and I skated a bit quick round the corner to the phone-box, clouds hiding the moon . . . empty, which was just as well, not that it was likely otherwise that time of night, though what time it was . . . still plenty of pennies from the bus-conductor on the first bus out of Catford Garage . . . must admit I was nervous even after three other kids and all—wondered how Mrs. Moss would cope . . . dropped a penny, let it go: dialled . . . buzz buzz . . . buzz buzz . . . on and on till I nearly went spare and gave up . . . buzz . . .

"Yes?" said a gotten-out-of-bed woman's voice.

I pressed button A. "Is that you Nurse Lewis?"

"No, who's that?"

"May I speak to her please? It's my wife, she's . . ."

"Been kept in Bromley Hospital—who's that?"

And then it dawned on me . . . "knocked off her push-bike by some lunatic in a car . . ."

"Listen," I said, "this is important—have any arrangements been made for the home deliveries on her list? only my wife's just started in labour."

"Not that I know of," she said. "I'm only the landlady, she has the bottom flat, and I haven't seen sight nor sound of her since she was run-over, but she's all right I'm told, but there haven't been no arrangements that I know of."

"No phone-number or anything? I mean, what am . . ."

"Nothing," she said, and then, more to herself, "more trouble than it's all worth, getting up all hours."

"Sorry I bothered you," and hung up.

Which left us in a right state up all manner of creeks.

• BACK HOME LAURENCE OPENED THE DOOR FOR ME, NO IDEA WHERE my key was.

"I've her lying down," he said. "She's perfectly all right for a while."

"Listen," I said, "we're up the creek—come out into the kitchen." At the bottom of the stairs I called up, "See you in a minute—we'll make some tea." And in the kitchen I told him.

"Well," he said, "we can do one of two things," and there was decision in his voice, he knew what he was doing, this was in his world, "we can either get her admitted to the nearest hospital with maternity facilities, or we can deliver the baby here. Has she any history of complications or difficulty with any of the others?"

"Not so far as I know—and we're all prepared, everything."

"Then the best thing to do," he said, "is to put it to her and let her make her own decision."

SHE WAS LYING DOWN, BUT STRUGGLED TO HER ELBOWS, AND WE HAD a bit of a kiss.

"Isn't it strange to think," she said, "that in just . . . in just . . ."

Knock knock on the water-works door.

"She nearly had the last one in Bromley High Street," I said to Laurence a bit quick, "nearly frightened the life out of the manageress of Lyons."

"Don't be daft," she said, but was all right.

"Listen, Joan," I said, "I'll put it to you straight . . ."

"No secrets except the milkman," she said, so I knew she could stand it. So I told her.

"Seems odd," she said. "I do hope Nurse will be all right, she's such a good sort."

"The point is—what would you like us to do?"

"What a blessing the children aren't here," she said . . . and then, "I mean, what can we do? Isn't there anybody else? there must be, surely."

"Now listen," I said, "Laurence has suggested we can do one of two things—either we can try to get you into a hospital, or . . ."

I hesitated. "Or he can deliver the baby here. We've got everything prepared and . . ."

But you didn't have to know her very well to know he wasn't in it with half a chance—and he saw it there and then.

"I suggest you phone the hospital," he said to me, "see what they say."

"I'm sorry, Laurie," she said, "it's not that I . . . well, it's . . ."

"That's all right, Joan," he said, and smiled a smile that would have kidded most people who hadn't listened to him these last hours, "it's your baby and you have every right to choose where to have it. It's extremely important you should be easy in your mind."

But she knew she'd hurt him, women have a way of not needing much to go on, and she began to cry—only they were sad tears, not racking ones, and there wasn't much harm in them that the pair of us couldn't manage.

ANYWAY, WE GOT HER SETTLED, AND WHILST SHE DIRECTED LAURENCE in the packing of a bag to take with her . . . "The second drawer, yes, that's the one, they should be at the back." . . . I skated round the corner to the phone-box again . . . the night very dark now, heavy clouds scudding across from the west, thunder (or a goods-train) away and gone . . . and got through with less bother . . . and told the story twice, once to the nurse the hospital switchboard put me on to, and then to the night sister on duty . . .

"I'm not quite sure whether there is a bed at any of the maternity units," she said, "but we know about Nurse Lewis, so it *is* an emergency . . . Will you hold the line please? and I'll inquire."

And I held it . . . could hear clickings and distant voices—you know, three minutes more like thirty, until you feel like writing a letter to the papers about the gross inefficiency of hospitals in general and . . .

"Hello," she said, "are you there?"

I merely said, "Yes."

"Well," she said, "I've arranged for your wife to be admitted to the Page Heath Unit—can I just have your address again please? and I'll get an ambulance sent right away."

AND THAT WAS THAT—IN LESS THAN TWENTY MINUTES (AS FAR AS WE could tell without the clock), the bag was packed . . . "You can bring my other things in later" . . . the tea drunk, the ambulance

had come, and we were away, bang bang, just like that, the first spots of rain spattering against the windscreen, Joan her own woman (mother of three), and Laurence and I with never a chance to exchange more than another sentence.

BY THE TIME WE REACHED THE MATERNITY UNIT ALONG PAGE HEATH Lane the rain was belting down, bouncing off the pavement the way heavy rain does, and there was thunder about that was no late-night goods on its last clatterings to the sidings at Orpington.

"You can't go home in this," said Joan. "See if they'll let you stay."

And they could . . . I gave her a kiss and a bit of love, the sister received her, Laurence handed over the bag to the nurse who was hovering (nice-looking fair girl, nineteen, twenty, obviously her first hospital, very clean hands, genuine smile) . . .

"If you wish," said the sister, "you may wait in the waiting-room, at least until the rain stops . . ." She smiled the standard smile. "Then I would go home if I were you, as there's nothing very much that you can do, is there?"

"Thank you," I said, Laurence in the rear rank, there to make the number up, and Joan lumbered off down the corridor . . . all we had to do was leave the women to get on with it: we counted as spares, not wanted on voyage.

NOT THAT THERE WAS ANYBODY ABOUT TO TELL US WHERE THE waiting-room was, but we found it by opening every door handy . . . big old house, ceilings high enough for sparrow-hawks, a wide staircase, and enough rooms to billet a regiment of infantry, built in the old days when skivvies were ten a penny (England yesterday, Africa today), there was just that faint hospital smell to keep you in the present, a notice board, a poster about The Need For Blood Donors, strips of polished brown lino down the centre of the corridor, a telephone on the wall next to one door . . . which was it, the waiting-room—and in we went, and Laurence switched on the light, though we left the door open in case anybody thought we were parking till morning.

I suppose they'd done their best, not that a bowl of Friday's flowers and a poster about the Advantages Of A Career In Nursing could make all that difference, nor even a tattering of old magazines and papers: but we opened the thin curtains so we could see when the rain stopped, drew up the two most comfortable chairs

round the empty grate (always seems the warmest place, even without a fire), and looked at each other.

"Bet you never bargained for this," I said.

"Well, no," he said, and smiled. "Quite like old times."

"I'm sorry about Joan, you know, not . . ."

"Think no more about it—she has every right to choose her own conditions—it's most important that she should be easy in her mind at this time. She must have complete and absolute trust in those attending her."

His words were just that bit formal again, and it seemed as good a time as any. "I would have trusted you."

He was embarrassed, naturally, but there was one of those moments you can have with someone, saying everything by saying nothing . . . and we just sat there, the sound of the rain insistent, draining away. I picked out a *Sunday Times* from the heap on the table, today's and all (though it must have been yesterday's by now), which was something, and I turned to the cricket, and he found a *National Geographical Magazine*—and we went through the motions. Then . . .

"Does she have her babies easily?" he said.

"Very—three or four hours. Even with Kath, the first, she went into Stone Park Hospital, that's at Beckenham, at about two in the morning, and Kath was born at ten past five."

"That's very good."

But we were making conversation: not that I was as worried as a husband is supposed to be, nor even as excited—we wanted five or six children, and this was the way of it—but that you can't exactly settle to the batting averages when the woman you are married to is away and alone in a world of contracting stress you can have no part of . . . but to talk was better than to let it get you down.

"That African in the Park," I said, "what about the rest of his case?"

"Against missions?" he said. "Do you really want to talk?" And he smiled. "Or are you just not wanting me bored stiff sitting here?"

"No, I'd like to."

"Providing you're not just trying to keep me contented—only merely to sit here in a comfortable chair, in my own time, made free of magazines, is, in itself, a considerable pleasure. It must be years since I've read one of these . . ." And this with no edge of

self-pity. "For example, there's an article in this one about the gold-mines in Johannesburg and Gathongo . . ." And off he went, on about this and that, obviously trying all he knew to keep me contented, my mind away from the world upstairs. "You take this photograph," he said, and held it for me to see: in colour, of the slag heaps around the city, white modern buildings in the foreground, vivid green trees lining the avenues, but these cones of slag seeming to glow with a soft yellow light, strangely beautiful . . . "No grass grows on them at all," he said, "because the earth has been impregnated with cyanide in the process of gold extraction—now there's a symbol for you! Why, grass grows all over the slag-dumps up Stoke!"

And it was a symbol, at that, and I thought about it for a bit . . .

"No," he was saying, "even just to sit here with the door open is enough."

"What was it like in prison?"

He gave it time . . . "I think the loneliness was the worst part."

"You weren't in solitary? They can't do that to you for two years."

"No," he said, "merely three days at a time at intervals—and then only during my first months. No, what I meant was the isolation. You see, as I didn't consider myself a criminal, I couldn't really share the sense of solidarity which the other prisoners shared—that it was, how do they say? a fair cop?" I nodded. "And that it was us against them."

"How did you get on with *us*?" I said.

"Quite well on the whole, except that their language was foul . . . I didn't really have much contact with many though—I refused to participate in my punishment, hence the solitary."

"Passive resistance?"

He smiled. "More passive than resistance—I merely wouldn't do any work. At first I was given these various terms in the punishment cells for refusing to obey the orders to work, but when the governor saw that I wasn't really out to make trouble, and that I wasn't to be persuaded, he found ways and means to avoid the issue, and I spent most of my time during work hours on my own in the cell which I shared with two other men."

"What did you do?"

He was embarrassed again. "There was a Bible I'd been given by the chaplain, and I—well, thought a lot." And smiled.

"Why didn't you work with the prison doctor? or at least in the hospital?"

"I don't think that you are necessarily given the work you are best fitted for, and in my case it never arose—but to have worked would have been an admission that I accepted even some of the conditions under which I was there." Just the statement, no pride.

"You and Janek," I said. "Two of a kind."

"We are always tempted at our weakest point—had it been Mulumbi or Gathongo I'd have worked with my brethren." And he seemed to be weighing me up again. "There are worse examples to follow than Janek."

"Granted," I said, but side-stepped. "What had you done if not at least acted like a criminal? I mean, Mau Mau was unlawful if nothing else."

Which was a raw nerve touched. "The Baluka were certainly not Mau Mau—Mau Mau was confined to the Kikuyu of Kenya, and involved sickening bestiality on both sides. Up in the Yumbala area the Baluka were provoked into the only course of action they could understand—violent, yes, but not bestial. Mau Mau was more a perverted religion than a course of action."

"Wasn't there something about a dam?"

His voice was sad. "Loot," he said, "that's what our African in the Park called it . . . They'd been granted some of their own land as a reservation under Queen Victoria, and had hunted it ever since, being a hunting people. Then the central government decided to build this hydro-electric power dam on the Lukatembe to supply the mining and industrial areas further south—which meant flooding most of the reservation."

"They did that at Kariba on the Zambezi. Progress."

"Industry must have power—but what did the Baluka know about either power or industry? All they could understand was the loss of their land, their fathers' land. What was called 'adequate compensation' was offered, money, another area closer to the hills—but they couldn't understand . . . It was a failure of communication."

"To think the poor benighted savages refused the benefits of our civilization."

"Sanitation," he said, "a balanced diet—and the Baluka are just as keen after their bright and shiny trade-goods as the middle-classes here you affect to despise. No, there are two sides to it—but the Baluka only saw one, and there was an uprising . . . put

down with all the other benefits of civilization, guns against spears. So the majority of the young men took to the hills. At least those the recruiting agents of the Witwatersrand Native Labour Organization hadn't been able to persuade south to the mines . . . Took to the hills to be eventually hunted down and held in Mulumbi." His voice was bitter. "A Rehabilitation Centre."

We gave it time . . . and then we heard footsteps coming down the stairs, along the corridor, the young nurse passed the open door not noticing us, we heard her moving about somewhere further along . . . and then she came back, saw us, or rather me, and popped in, looking to be as excited as the kids had been—which made it her first midwifery experience for a stone cert.

"Your wife is having her baby ever so easily," she said. "Sister says it will be ever so soon."

"Thank you," I said. "Give her my love."

She just grinned and went out, and her footsteps went on upstairs.

AND WE TALKED ABOUT THAT, AND NATURAL CHILDBIRTH, AND THE African woman's supposed easy delivery behind the nearest bush, no bother, back chopping wood within the hour . . .

"A hallowed myth," he said, and unhallowed it at length, until it dawned on him that it was giving me the screaming habdabs . . . and we laughed, and went from that to this, and from this to the other, to silence, the rain still belting down . . . and then back to the theme.

"Some people would call you political," I said.

And, again, he meant it enough for eloquence. "If standing between the whip and the flesh of my brother is political, then I am not ashamed . . . But how can any European in Africa, Christian or not, be *non*-political? His very presence as a European is a political fact."

"That what you were doing with Kumali? standing between him and the whip?"

"Yes," he said, "partly."

"What else?"

A sudden squall of even heavier rain flung against the windows, and we heard it out—a minute, two minutes, it seemed a long time.

"There's no very simple answer . . . The Christian must act, his faith must result in works, otherwise he might as well lock

himself away as a Trappist and try to save his own soul by contemplating his own selfishness . . .”

I could have said a lot, but didn't—dubious stuff this, Thomas Merton.

“But,” he said, “his actions must always be considered ones, and he must never refrain from action because of some good excuse or possible consequence. And if one acts out of love, truly out of love and nothing else, then God will understand and forgive even if no man ever does.”

“Could you have been wrong?”

“I may well have been . . . Nobody can read motives but God . . . selfishness, pride, exhibitionism, self-righteousness—so many.”

There was another, shorter squall . . . and he rested back in his chair, though sagged would be the unkind word.

“When Kumali came back that second time,” he said, his voice gentle now, “we were just about to start our supper. This was the night after that time at Mulumbi, and I was still empty of feeling, so tired I'd hardly bothered to tell Janek much, and certainly nothing about Kumali. Janek was rambling on about some new chapter he was adding to a book of his, and I was listening more out of politeness than anything else—when I heard the trucks coming . . . No trucks ever came to Yumbala without we'd be expecting them, and I remember I made some remark to Janek about more troops moving into the hills after terrorists, and he helped us both to soup—tinned tomato, a great luxury. We always had supper in his quarters, just the two of us . . . The trucks stopped, still some distance away, and we heard nothing more except the ordinary night noises, and we started on our main dish—and then the door was kicked in with a crash, and Kumali rushed in at the head of ten or a dozen men, all armed . . . Janek didn't move, merely put down his fork—he always ate with just the fork, like an American.

“‘This is not the way Yumbala taught you, Adam Kumali,’ he said, never lacked courage.

“‘It is the way of Gathongo,’ answered Kumali, ‘and the way of Mulumbi.’

“And it was to be between the two of them, the other men content to range themselves around the room—to them, this wasn't an ordinary white man, but ‘Matukulawe Magwaro Lukabele’—‘The Elephant with the Healing Tusk’, something like that,

although the nicknames they give one are not always translatable.

"‘It is not good way,’ said Janek.

"‘It is the way for us now,’ answered Kumali.

"‘I have small time to speak such words,’ said Janek. ‘What do you want in Yumbala?’

"And I saw several of the men handling their guns as though some course of action had been pre-arranged, and I went to stand up—but several of the men leapt at me.

"‘Do not touch him!’ shouted Kumali in Baluka, ‘I kill the man to touch my Doctor!’ And they let me be . . . and I began to do what little I could to calm them down."

He stopped, still slumped.

"Would they have shot Janek?"

"I don't really know—Kumali was almost insane with wrongs, and imagined wrongs . . . But Janek seemed to take on a dignity, rather like that of the bronze we saw today, his face lost its inessential and the man, the real Janek was there, probably for the first time in years. And somehow, with what little I was able to say, Kumali began to see it too, and their relationship, all that had been good between them seemed to flood back. But he was still angry, and he'd probably said so much about what he would do to the ‘Elephant’ that he was obliged to do something . . . but it was all very confusing and uncertain, everybody except Janek talking and shouting, the men handling their guns, most of them truculent and unwilling that Kumali should be swayed from what he'd said. But, as I say, they were eventually persuaded to take us as hostages."

"Why both of you?"

"It was just to have been Janek at first . . . but, well, you must remember that he was an old man, and almost certainly a sick one, and I thought it best that—well . . ."

"For you to go to keep an eye on things?"

"He stood more chance with me there than he would have on his own."

There was another squall of rain against the windows.

"What was he sick with?" I said, "and if you say leprosy, I won't believe you."

He managed a smile, though you could tell what it took. "I think it was something to do with the long-term effects of his accident. I'm not really qualified to say, but, from what little he ever said, it was apparently a sealed source isotope exposure,

something like that anyway, which had all the usual effects at the time—the scarring, loss of hair—and now, eleven or twelve years later, these long-term effects: probably leukaemia. But he never mentioned them, refused any medical examination, and one could only see that all was not well with him by the way he was going down bank, ageing rapidly, older than his years, even allowing for life in the tropics.”

“So you talked yourself into it?”

“That would make me more of a martyr than I know I have courage for,” he said. “Let’s just say we went.”

“Into the notorious Kinyanjui forests,” I said. “What was it like?”

“One tends to forget . . . At first, Kumali had five or six hideaways in various parts of the area, and although we were never what you could call comfortable we were not too badly off—the men would raid nearby farms for food, and then we would all move to another hideaway. It was his idea to collect enough explosives to blow the dam whilst it was being built—he was a natural leader, and his knowledge of the European mind was enough to keep him out of most traps and ambushes, although, of course, he was not always successful, and we had a steady run of losses by either disease or wounds. It would be wrong to picture him as a kind of Baluka Robin Hood—he was fighting for his life and for a cause he and his men believed in—but he always used mercy to his enemies, and always did his best to bring back the wounded, even at considerable risk as no quarter was given by the security forces . . .” He laughed, bitter and angry. “We were the savages . . . But, on the whole, he was extremely successful, and destroyed at least three cranes and several months work. In fact, the authorities went so far as to have special officers sent up from Kenya, men who had dispersed and destroyed the last elements of Mau Mau there. In Kumali, they met more than their match. His men were all Baluka, hunters with superlative bushcraft, and his overall command was enough to put it to the best possible use.” He smiled, really amused. “We have actually camped not a hundred yards from a camp set up by some British troops—I think they were Lancashire Fusiliers: this was quite late in the campaign mounted against us—and our men stole their supper by creating a false alarm somewhere else and then flitting in during the panic and lifting the stew-pot. It was the first European meal we had had since our original supplies ran out—and then, to add insult to

injury, they replaced the empty pot inside the tent of the young officer in charge before the soldiers had come back from looking for us." And his smile saddened. "Soldiers? they were conscripted boys—what did they know of the Baluka?"

(Man against man, brother against brother, for how long?)

"Did you always go with them then?" I said.

"No, usually Janek and I would remain at whatever hideaway Kumali was raiding from, just two or three guards, and the wounded; but that time I had gone back with him to attend to a man so severely wounded they'd been obliged to leave him behind under cover . . . But, to go back to Kumali, there was a price of several hundred pounds on his head, and his reputation among the other gangs was tremendous. There was even talk of his being the Black Messiah, the embodiment of all the dead kings, risen to lead the Baluka to their old freedom—but he would have none of it, and we were gradually isolated as these other gangs were broken up, gradually driven further and further away from the dam . . . And then the bombing began . . ."

There was what was to be the last squall of rain, longer than the others, but the last, and we heard it out . . .

"We retreated deeper into the hills to the lakes, and I think he knew his time would come. Not that I think his heart had ever been in it—it was more to hurt Janek."

"How did Janek stand it?"

"He was cracking up day by day. He would lie on a rough pallet by the hour, and Kumali took to crouching on his hunkers by him, and somehow they seemed to come closer together—still talking formally, but Janek was softening, his old Bih' held across his body and a look of indescribable peace on his face . . . And then one day, as I was changing a dressing on someone close by, I saw that Kumali was holding Janek's thin hands in his—the first time I had ever seen Janek allow any native to so much as touch him—and I looked at Janek, and he was crying, the tears running unashamedly down his cheeks . . . What they said I don't know, but that night Kumali began to talk the men into giving themselves up."

I said nothing and he thought about it, the rain dying out, and it was as though he found it hard to go on . . . but he did, sitting up to make it quick before we ought to go.

"It took more than a week . . . Kumali used all the arguments: we were isolated, surrounded, Janek would speak for them—and,

at length, the men agreed. After all, their position was hopeless, and they agreed, but not without a lot of fierce discussion—rather like that of our African in the Park—being a proud people they had to salvage what they could of their pride. Janek would make no promises they wouldn't be punished, but I was able to say that the world would watch that the men he spoke for would be treated fairly. It was agreed that two men should take me to make contact with the security forces. As a first step Kumali and all the men dumped their guns in a heap in the clearing by the lakeside, chose the two men by lot—and we made ready to start for where we knew there'd be troops encamped . . . But we didn't get a chance."

AND I WAS ON THE BREATH OF ASKING "WHY?" WHEN WE HEARD the footsteps coming down the stairs again, quicker this time, almost running, and we looked at each other . . . and then the young nurse was at the phone outside the door, her face white, dialling, dialling . . . and Laurence was sitting up on the edge of his chair now, some sixth medical sense I suppose, and I found my heart beginning to pound just that bit . . .

"This is Page Heath," she was saying. "Put me through to the Night Obstetrician please, it's very important."

Laurence was at the door now, listening.

"Hello," she was saying, "you must find him, it's an emergency—please hurry, I'll hang on, but please hurry."

And he was through the door. "I am a doctor," he said. "Tell me please."

She put her hand over the mouthpiece, and looked at him, startled and inexperienced. "Sister just told me to get . . ."

"Tell me, nurse!" he said, and it would have taken a matron to face him.

"There's been a hæmorrhage, the baby's born, but . . ."

"Take me at once," he said, "put that phone up, and take me."

And she did, she did, cancelled the call, and hung up.

"Pray," he said to me, and they were gone, footsteps up the stairs.

WHAT CAN I SAY?

All I did was sweat it out. It would be a lie to say that I prayed, though I did think what I would do if she, if she died . . . left with

three young children (what could I tell the children?), widower—and got to feeling very sorry for myself: saw the funny side of it and laughed—then felt guilty, laughing and Joan in a bad way, possibly dying . . . though she couldn't be, only other people died, it couldn't happen to us . . . could it?

And nothing happened . . . which could be good, as Laurence was obviously coping—or bad, because there was nothing could be done, and they didn't like to come down to tell me.

I tried going out to the bottom of the stairs, listening, and then remembered it *was* a woman's world, and went back in, almost ashamed of myself.

And so on . . . through the papers and magazines—though not for long: the Advantages Of A Career In Nursing . . . sitting, standing at the window looking out at Page Heath Lane, nobody about, sitting again . . . and then (how long?) the footsteps down the stairs . . .

I was at the door quicker than that.

IT WAS THE SISTER, SMILING MORE THAN A STANDARD SMILE.

"It's all right," she said, "you have a son, and we're sure your wife will be all right."

What could I say anyway? But she knew the ropes, this one.

"Your friend," she said, "he's a fine doctor—he'll be down quite soon. In the meantime he's prescribed strong sweet tea."

And we laughed, and (so help me) I went with her into the kitchen to help make it.

LAURENCE, DR. LAURENCE KINMAN, AND I DRA WERS OURS IN THE Sister's Office, and she had not only the ordinary deference for doctors you find in nurses, but something more, let us not try to give it a big name . . . all I knew was that Joan was sleeping, the boy (our son) was eight pound three ounces, that I felt tired, that Laurence was writing a report, that the tea was strong and sweet and that he drank his one-handed as he wrote, engrossed, with no more of a tremor than I had.

HALF-WAY BACK ALONG PAGE HEATH LANE, WITH THIS DEEP DAMI smell of rain in the earth, the moon pale behind tomorrow's rain I nerved myself to ask him—but couldn't connect what he said (third stage hæmorrhage . . . ergometrine by injection . . . manua

removal) with the body (the living body) of the Joan I knew, and loved, and . . . and as I began to cry he put his arm round my shoulders, and we just walked on home.

It being time enough, the praying came later.

MONDAY

8

These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

REVELATION 7:14

WE NATURALLY SLEPT LATE, AND WOULD HAVE SLEPT LATER BUT FOR need to phone to know how she was . . .

Had a good night, baby fine, and we could go in to see her anytime between then and twelve o'clock, but about eleven would be best . . .

And then, being in the phone-box with money no object, I phoned this place ten minutes walk from Holborn Viaduct at half-nine—and they, being a considerate firm to work for, were delighted, and extended me a couple of days to get things straight, no bother.

LAURENCE HAD THE BREAKFAST READY BY WHEN I GOT BACK (IN this case two bacon sandwiches and more tea than I did), we washed and shaved in our own time (though I did put the washing-up we hadn't done from Sunday dinner in to soak in another bowl), spruced up . . . (and I did notice the blue Programme torn into unnecessarily small pieces at the back of the grate—probably scattered there like chaff of the summer threshing floor or something, not that he was one for gestures or symbols or things, and not that I let on I'd noticed) . . . I told Mrs. Palmer . . .

"I *am* pleased," she said, "a boy—although you'll have to watch out you don't spoil him, what with having three girls. Still, give her all the best from us, won't you. Les *will* be pleased, wait till I tell him tonight."

Then the woman in the Fish Shop. "Thought she might be early," she said, "she looked that tired when she was in the other

day—bet you're glad it's a boy. I'll probably be going in to see Nurse Lewis this afternoon—she'll be pleased, I know."

AND THEN WE WALKED THROUGH THE BRIGHT ELEVEN-O'CLOCK morning back along Page Heath Lane.

"Still interested?" he said, and I knew what it must have cost him to ask.

"We didn't get a chance," I said, and we laughed—and that was the sadness: the death of men and brethren, and all I could see was the sunshine. But it gave him a perspective, a distance to view from, there being both a time to be born, and a time to die, otherwise I don't think he'd have made it without shadows, agony, a tearing of thorns.

"No," he said, "we didn't get a chance . . . We were already more surrounded than we knew. I suppose that with the week of discussion and argument Kumali had neglected his usual caution—I mean, the purpose being to surrender, it probably didn't seem to matter all that much about watch being kept. However, all the remaining men were assembled to see us depart, all the guns, useless for lack of ammunition, were in this heap in the clearing, Janek was lying propped up against the trunk of a tree, and Kumali was standing next to him—I can see it so plainly: he was holding Janek's old Bible, about to give it to me for proof to the security forces that all was well with him—Janek had written a note on the inside cover with the only stub of pencil we had . . . when, suddenly, there was the most tremendous burst of firing which seemed to come from every direction at once . . . men fell screaming, some ran for the guns, although none reached them, others leaped into the water—then the native troops came charging out of cover, shouting as they came, some European officers—and we three, Kumali and I standing, Janek lying against the tree, remained still, unbelieving, shocked into stillness . . . the troops shouting, bayonetting men on the ground, clubbing . . . shooting at the swimmers, blood in the water—the tiger fish, you could see them, flashing silver . . . all so quickly, everything happening at once . . . and then one of them, a big sergeant, a Masai by his tribal marks, saw Kumali, and stopped, grinning, and raised his gun—I think it was one of those called a Sten—raised it quite slowly, deliberately, Janek scrambling to his knees, Kumali turning to help him—a whistle blowing somewhere . . . And then the short burst of firing—and Janek kneeling for what seemed a very

long time, a look on his face I shall never forget, Kumali half-behind him with his left arm hanging limp, the Bible slipping from his fingers, the blood pulsing down his arm . . . and then Janek crumpling, the whistle blowing again and again, the other firing stopping—and the sergeant not believing what he'd done, the grin remaining fixed . . . and Janek shuffled one movement in front of Kumali and then pitched forward . . . The Bible dropped, Kumali looked at me, his eyes demented, turned, and ran into the trees, his arm clutched to his side."

We walked on, twenty, thirty yards.

"Nobody moved to go after him, and he got clean away, wounded though he was . . . Janek was dead . . . there were just the fish swirling in the water . . . a man dragging himself out, screaming . . . no other sound."

"It was Kumali's blood on the Bible then?"

He nodded.

"And he somehow killed the sergeant?"

He nodded again . . . "Though I'm not sure of all the facts, I think he must have shadowed us for the days it took to get us out of the area, bided his time . . . the sergeant was found in his sleeping-bag the last morning, stabbed, mutilated with a steel tent-peg . . . there were sentries, and Kumali had but the one arm . . . how he did it . . ."

And I gave him another twenty, thirty yards.

"I heard in Mulumbi of his death . . . his arm must have been in a terrible state, and I believe he walked into a camp of native troops, Masai . . . shouting that he was Adam Kumali, slayer of Masai, that no Masai bullet could touch him . . . so they used knives."

"Why didn't you say all this at the trial?"

He smiled, gently, and his was the better way.

"You need a sympathetic listener," he said, and was his own man and more . . . and we made Page Heath Maternity Unit in good order. Still a lot I wanted to know, but we had till the 27th.

THE NIGHT STAFF WERE OFF AND GONE OF COURSE, BUT THEY MUST have left the good word because we got the treatment . . .

"Yes doctor, no doctor, three bags full, doctor . . ."

Straight up to the room on the fifth floor, no bother

SHE LOOKED TIRED, NATURALLY, BUT AS HAPPY AS NEED BE WHAT with having the baby in her arms and all . . . so there were kisses and whatnot, but I might just as well have been a spare there.

"They told me," she said to him. "I don't know how . . . ; how to . . ."

"Then don't try," he said.

She got a grip of herself, and looked down at the sleeping baby—our son, come to think of it.

"We're going to call him Laurence," she said, which was news to me.

"Don't call him that," he said, smiling. "Call him Stephen."